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Letters of the Rev. John
Smith



LETTERS

OF

✓
THE REV. JOHN SMITH,

A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER,

TO HIS BROTHER,

THE REV. PETER SMITH,

A METHODIST PREACHER.

PHILADELPHIA:
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LETTERS

FROM

JOHN SMITH TO PETER SMITH.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

DEAR BROTHER :—

IT is my purpose to write for the press a series of plain letters addressed to you, of which this is the first. You are an Arminian, I am a Calvinist. We cannot both be right; and as one or the other must be in the wrong, you will not think it strange that I assume the wrong to be on your side. I propose in these letters to point out the errors and inconsistencies of Arminianism; but I trust that it is as far beneath my dignity to write in the style of abuse, as it could be beneath your dignity to read such a style with patience. The great denomination

to which you belong, we Presbyterians rejoice to recognize as one of the leading branches of the church of Christ, and I, for one, do not find it in my heart to treat her with abuse. We have between us a common Christianity, in whose defense we can stand side by side ; and shoulder to shoulder, we can press forward to the attack of the common foe. We have a common Saviour, who is precious alike to you and to us. As we ought not to be objects of fierce attack by you, you ought not to be objects of fierce attack by us ; and you certainly shall not be by me.

We cannot, however, both be in the right. To us it is quite clear that your church, while she holds to the great essentials, ignores some important principles of religion. The gospel, which you and your brethren preach, is not, indeed, another gospel ; the elements of salvation are there, but, as it strikes us, these elements are strangely mixed and compounded with human devices and human errors. It has always seemed to us that the Christian warrior, clad in the panoply of Methodist-Arminianism, fights at manifest disadvantage. The armor appears scant and defective. Pardon me, brother, but either we have too much, or you have not

enough. The Arminian helmet of salvation may do for you, but it would hardly cover our defenseless heads. Your shield of faith may be sufficient for your purpose, but it is not large enough ; its texture is not firm enough to ward off all the fiery darts of our adversaries. The sword, which you wield, is doubtless the sword of the Spirit ; but the edge is too often turned and blunted by unfortunate strokes, against what you denominate the errors of Calvinism, but what are in reality the adamantine truths of God's eternal word. To point out these defects, to set forth the inconsistencies and contradictions in your system of theology, and to lead the reader from the Arminian form of Christianity to the purer and more perfect religion of the Bible, is the task I propose to myself in the composition of the following letters.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER II.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE doctrinal system of the Arminian Methodists often reminds me of the image which Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, saw in vision. While the head, the arms, the body, and the legs were each of solid metal, of gold and silver, and brass and iron, the feet and toes had this strange peculiarity, they were partly of iron and partly of potter's clay. The composition of those feet and toes strikes me as a capital representation of Arminianism, which has at once the iron strength of truth, and the crumbling incoherence of error. The great fundamental truths of the gospel are there. The fall of man, the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His sacrificial offering, the regeneration of the sinner by the Holy Spirit,—these are all there. But, unfortunately, with every one of these great scriptural truths are mingled errors more or less serious; some of them quite specious, others quite absurd. Let me now, my brother, point out to you the proportions of the iron and the clay of which your theological

system is made up. The standards of the Methodist Episcopal Church set forth the following doctrines :—

1st. God created man a free agent.

This is iron.

2d. Adam lost his free agency in the fall.

This is clay.

3d. Through grace free agency was restored to Adam.

Clay.

4th. Adam was constituted the federal head and representative of his posterity.

Iron.

5th. The human race were involved in ruin by their federal head and representative, so that death temporal, spiritual, and eternal seized them all.

Iron.

6th. The human race could not in justice have been thus involved in ruin, had not God determined to send His Son into the world to counteract the evils of the apostacy.

Clay.

7th. After the fall, God, as a just Being, was under obligation to do one of two things : either to cut off the race at once in the person of

Adam, or to provide a Saviour by way of compensation to the lost family of man.

Miry clay.

8th. In the infinitude of His grace, God provided a Saviour, the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, to redeem wretched sinners from the thralldom of sin and death.

Solid iron.

9th. But if God had not sent His Son to redeem the world, the world could never have been called to account for transgression.

Clay.

10th. Without grace sinners cannot repent and turn to God.

Iron.

11th. If God did not bestow grace, sinners would not be under obligation to repent and turn to God.

Clay.

12th. God has not the right to pass by any sinner of the human race. He has not the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, nor has He the right to harden whom He will harden.

Potter's clay.

Clay enough, surely ! The feet and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image could hardly have had

a greater proportion of it. In the skillful hands, however, of your preachers and writers, the iron and the clay, gospel truth and human error, are so attempered; the angular projections so neatly filed away, the ugly hollows and indentations so nicely filled up, that the mass comes forth a system smooth and rounded; beautiful to look upon, but great care to be used in the handling. I propose to try a few strokes of the hammer on the several parts of this ingeniously constructed system, and should the soft clay separate and fly off from the hard metal, let the result be attributed rather to the unlucky combination of such discordant materials, than to the strength or skill of the arm that wields the implement.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER III.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE Arminian scheme, I said, is a mixture of truth and error, of gospel truth and human error. Christ Jesus the true Foundation is indeed laid, but on that foundation is reared no

small amount of the wood, hay, and stubble of men's devices. Among these devices are two distinguished by their singularity: one, that free agency was lost by sin; the other, that free agency was restored by grace. "We believe," say the Doctrinal Tracts, published by order of the General Conference,—“we believe,” say all the preachers, elders, and bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church,—“we believe that in the moment Adam fell he had no freedom of will left.” But why do you all believe so? Is it because the Bible says so? Will you point to a single passage in the Old or New Testament where such a statement is made? Or, if this is asking too much, will you at least name some passage from which such an inference even can with fairness be drawn? You know that you cannot. You know, my good brother, that we are all free agents, and that the sacred oracles set this forth in language very distinct and very clear. “Yes, we are all free agents,” you reply; “but free agency was restored by grace. A measure of free will, say the Doctrinal Tracts, is supernaturally given to all men, and therefore all men are now responsible agents.” This is odd enough. But where, it may be asked, do the Scriptures teach that fallen man had freedom of

will restored to him by grace? In the same book, chapter, and verse, I suppose, where it is stated that he lost it! It would be a curious subject of inquiry, how long an interval there was between the loss and the restoration of the free agency of the first man—between the point at which he ceased to be responsible and the point where he again was clothed with responsibility. The Doctrinal Tracts, unfortunately, throw no light on this mystery. Let us, however, venture to suppose it to have been the period that elapsed from the instant of the fall to the cool of the evening, when the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden was heard calling to him, “Where art thou?” During this space of time, then, the father of the human race could do no wrong, according to the Arminian theory, because he had no freedom of will left. To despise the glorious Creator, to shun His presence, to resist His mandates, involved no guilt! If Adam was finally saved, the acts of that hour needed no forgiveness; if he was finally lost, the sins of that hour could not be punished. True, he was originally endowed with all the faculties requisite to secure accountability, but that accountability ceased at the moment that the first act of sin was perpe-

trated. After the first transgression he was no longer a responsible agent. To be amenable at the bar of his Judge, he must have an adequate supply of grace, and that supply the Judge himself was in duty bound to furnish. Until that gift, the gift of grace, was bestowed, the new-born rebel might have it all his own way. There was no law in the statute book of Heaven to reach him. If grace had been withheld for a whole year, then the acts of that whole year would have been irresponsible acts. If grace had been kept back a thousand years, the high crimes and misdemeanors compressed into that vast period would in justice have passed unrebuked and unpunished. And if grace had never been conferred at all, the traitor would have been completely absolved from all obligation to love and obey his righteous Sovereign; through all the future it would have been his dreadful privilege to hate and blaspheme his Maker! His Maker could not have called him to an account, for the simple Arminian reason that, where no grace is given, the sinner cannot be taken in hand for his misdeeds. Here, then, we have two figments engrafted on the teachings of God's holy word—the loss of man's free agency by sin, and the restoration of free agency by

grace. The whole circle of theological errors does not furnish two instances of purer fiction. Such, however, is the ingenuity with which these singular fictions have been dovetailed in the great system of Divine truth, that multitudes take it for granted that they do of right belong there.

Your late excellent Bishop Hedding, when a young man, once filled an appointment to preach in a Free-Will Baptist house of worship somewhere in New England—I think it was in New Hampshire. It was a custom among the members of that denomination, after preaching, to make an exhortation, or, as they called it, to “free their minds.” When Mr. Hedding had finished his sermon, several of the members rose, one after another, to their feet, to confirm the truth of what the minister had said to them. At length a brother, who was perfectly delighted with the discourse, took the floor, to free his mind also. After saying a great many handsome things about the sermon, wishing to pay the preacher a particularly agreeable compliment, he concluded by saying: “Brethren, you have heard the truth to-day, the whole truth, and more than the truth.” When you Methodist Arminians teach that Adam was constituted the

federal head and representative of his posterity, you say the truth. When you further teach, as Mr. Watson does, that death—temporal, spiritual, and eternal—passed upon all men in consequence of the sin of the first man, you say the whole truth. But when, in addition to this, you maintain that free agency was lost in the fall, and afterward restored by grace, you travel out of the record—you say *more than the truth*.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER IV.

DEAR BROTHER:—

YOU ask me to state our views of free agency. This is easily done. Adam was created a free agent, was a free agent when he fell, was a free agent after the fall, and will to all eternity be a free agent. Holiness does not communicate freedom to the will, and sin cannot destroy it. Gabriel is a free agent, but he is not more free than he would be were he an angel of darkness; and the Devil is as truly a free agent now as when he was an angel of light. What is free-

dom of the will? What is free agency? The power to act according to one's choice; the power to do what one desires and aims to do. A holy angel loves God and obeys Him; he does this from choice, and is consequently a free agent. A fallen angel hates God and opposes Him; he does this from choice, and he, also, is a free agent. It is just so with the race to which we belong; some obey the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved, others refuse to obey Him and are lost. Both those who obey and those who do not obey, those who are saved and those who are lost, are alike responsible for their acts; and they are alike responsible for their acts because they are equally free. The impenitent sinner, for example, persists in rejecting the great salvation, and in doing this, he simply follows the dictates of his will, he will not come to the Saviour. He will not be saved; in nothing that he does is he more free than in this; he could not be more free than he is, because he is already as free as it is possible for any creature to be; it is his deliberate choice to be what he is, an impenitent sinner. He is, it is true, the slave of sin, but he is a voluntary slave; he is deeply in love with his ponderous fetters; he refuses to be emancipated, and rejects with scorn all offers of

deliverance ; arguments and appeals directed to the understanding and the conscience are thrown away ; no promises of future happiness, no threatenings of future wrath, nothing short of Omnipotent power can shake his fixed purpose ; infatuated as he is, the sinner is in all this perfectly free.

These are our views on this subject, and we are sure that they are as strictly in accordance with the dictates of common sense as they are with the sacred teachings of the Scriptures. To sum up the matter, you and we agree, and also disagree. We are agreed in this, that man is a free agent. But in this we differ : you believe that free agency was lost in the fall, we hold that it was not lost ; you think that free agency was restored by grace, we maintain that as it could never be lost, it could not as a matter of course be restored.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER V.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE trial of our first parents was, according to the representations of Arminianism, virtually of the nature of a farce. It was all sham. Far be it from me to charge you or your brethren with regarding that great transaction in the light of a farce, or with actually believing that it was all a sham. To say this, would be to slander the denomination to which you belong. But the teachings of your system, brother, do certainly show up the whole matter in the light of a solemn farce. Now for the proof. Your standards maintain that the whole human race were put on trial in the person of Adam, their federal head and representative. “Adam,” according to Richard Watson, the great expounder of Methodist Arminianism, “Adam is to be regarded as a *public man*, the *head* and *representative* of the human race, who, in consequence of his fall, have fallen with him.” Again he says: “The circumstances of the case infallibly show that in the whole transaction they—Adam and Eve—stood before their Maker as public

persons, and as the legal representatives of their descendants, though in so many words they are not invested with these titles." "The threatenings pronounced on the first pair," continues Mr. Watson, "have all respect to their posterity as well as to themselves. The death threatened affects all. In Adam all die; death entered by sin, that is by his sin, and then passed upon all men." Nor does he explain this of natural death alone. "The opinion of those divines who include, in the penalty attached to the first offense, death, *bodily*, *spiritual*, and *eternal*, is not to be puffed away by sarcasm, but stands firm on inspired testimony."* So far all is plain, and true as it is plain. But we are now, unhappily, about to enter the domain of fancy and of farce. You hold the doctrine that God, though He so placed mankind at the disposal of their head and chief that if he stood, they stood, if he fell, they fell, had not the right to leave them to the full consequences of the representation to which He had Himself subjected them. This is, it must be owned, singular enough, and has all the force of contradiction. Methodists accuse Universalists of representing Jehovah as

* Watson's Theological Institutes, part ii. chap. xviii.

threatening sinners merely to alarm them, as employing the most fearful terms of warning and rebuke simply—for nothing. The accusation is just. But a similar accusation may be laid against the Methodists. They admit, indeed, that God threatened Adam's posterity as well as Adam himself; but it was a mere Universalist threat, it meant nothing. We, on the contrary, believe, not only like you, that death in its three terrific forms was denounced against our race, but we believe, what many of you do not believe, that the awful penalty was just. We stand abashed indeed, we feel our littleness, we are conscious of our deep ignorance, when we approach this mysterious, this incomprehensible transaction. But we are bold to claim, that God always does what is perfectly fair and right; and what we ourselves would see is perfectly right and fair, had we only understandings equal to the high task of comprehending His ways, had we only line enough to fathom the ocean of His perfections. With an unflinching front, therefore, we maintain that it would be in accordance with justice in the strictest sense, had the full penalty annexed to the first sin committed on our planet been carried into execution. For this we are assailed in no measured

terms, from ten thousand Arminian pulpits. The Rev. Dr. R. S. Foster, in a work entitled "Objections to Calvinism," printed at the Methodist Book Concern in Cincinnati, has resort to the following style of argumentation: "Sinners were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for this: they cannot escape from corruption, and so are not guilty for remaining in it." "His disability came with him into the world; it was communicated as a part of his existence; it was his very and essential nature; and now, was he to blame for an existence and nature which were forced upon him, which never, at any period, he consented to, and which he never could avoid? His first parent may be to blame, but surely he cannot be responsible; for he not only did not bring his disability on himself, but it was imposed on him, without the possibility of its removal. Let him sin, no being in the universe can censure him, for he is not to blame."* Thus Dr. Foster openly takes sides with rebellion, and publicly proclaims to the universe that, had not the effects of Adam's sin been neutralized by the atonement of Christ, the sinner must go clear;

* Objections to Calvinism, from the article, "Effectual Calling."

while the whole blame of all the sins and crimes perpetrated from the creation of the world, would have to rest with God Himself; and the reverend doctor would have no scruples to tell his Maker so to His face. But if, as Mr. Watson declares, the threatenings pronounced on the first pair had all respect to their posterity, as well as to themselves, those threatenings must most certainly have been just, otherwise God, the Fountain of justice, could never have given utterance to them. If then the threatenings were just, it is clear that the penalty denounced must also have been just, and it is quite as clear that, if it had been unjust to let the penalty denounced take its natural course, the threat itself of the penalty would have been equally unjust. If, for example, it would be unjust in a human tribunal to confine an innocent man in the penitentiary, it would also be an act of gross wrong to sentence him to the penitentiary. If it is a sin to inflict the penalty of death on a person guilty of no crime, it must likewise be a sin to pronounce sentence of death on such a person. A judge of one of our criminal courts—we will suppose—sentences to the gallows a batch of unoffending creatures who he knows are innocent, who he well knows deserve not such a fate; in

full knowledge, however, of their freedom from all guilt, he solemnly proceeds to declare that, on such a day, between such and such hours, the terror-stricken wretches before him shall hang by the neck till they are dead. Would not everybody shrink from a farce so revolting? Now you Arminians, my dear brother, are chargeable with placing the Supreme Judge of the world in an attitude precisely analagous to this. He, to whom the future is as the present, to whom things that are not are as things that are, has before Him in the person of Adam the represented human race; with that race He is about to try a dangerous and an unlawful experiment; an experiment for which, in future ages, He will be called to account by Arminians, Pelagians, and infidels. He knows that the first parent is to blame, and that with the first parent the blame of the great transgression should rest. He knows that it would be contrary to every principle of right and justice to inflict woes and sufferings on millions of millions innumerable, on account of the sin of that one individual; for if the Rev. Dr. R. S. Foster knows that this was unjust, God, the all-wise God, must certainly have known it too. In spite of all this, however, in spite of the guiltlessness of humanity, in spite

of the flagrant wrong of making the transgression of their chief the ground of condemnation to unborn myriads, He proceeds to pass sentence of death—death bodily, spiritual, and eternal—on the entire series of generations from the beginning to the end of time. I conclude as I begun, with the remark that the trial of our first parents was, according to the teachings of Arminianism, of the nature of a farce—a solemn, a stupendous, an awful farce.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER VI.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE writer of the Epistle to the Romans, after expatiating on the deep things of God—the entrance of sin into the world by the first man; the superabounding grace of the second Man; the rejection of the Jews; the calling of the Gentiles; the sovereignty which has mercy on whom it will have mercy, and hardens whom it will harden—triumphantly challenges any one, man or angel, to show that the Creator is in his debt; and if this can be made to appear,

assures the modest claimant, in terms of lofty satire, that it shall be recompensed to him again. The Apostle probably never suspected that this challenge, so boldly given, would be as boldly accepted. He could hardly have foreseen that, in future ages, a branch of the Christian Church, pluming itself on its superior sanctity, claiming to be the special depositary of gospel grace, and numbering its membership by hundreds of thousands, would actually stand forth, and, in behalf of all the sinners from the beginning to the end of time, set up a plea against Jehovah Himself for damages sustained by them in the fall of their great forefather. The united body of Arminian Methodists, Episcopal and non-Episcopal, hold it as an article of faith that, after the fatal revolt in Eden, God, as a just and righteous Being, was under obligation to do one of two things: to destroy Adam at once, to prevent the propagation of his species; or, to make adequate compensation to his posterity for the loss they sustained in that great catastrophe.

“Had not God provided a Redeemer,” says Dr. Adam Clarke, your favorite commentator, “He would no doubt have terminated the whole mortal story by cutting off the original trans-

gressors; for it would have been unjust to permit them to propagate their like in such circumstances that their offspring must be unavoidably and eternally miserable." As a matter of fact, the original transgressors were not cut off, but were permitted to propagate their like. To meet this difficulty, Arminian ingenuity has been taxed to the utmost, and the result is a new doctrine of atonement. It is indeed a very odd sort of atonement, yet it holds the same relation to the Arminian system that the keystone does to the arch. It is not the atonement of Christ. It is not an atonement made by rebellious sinners to their holy and righteous Creator for wrongs done to *Him*. It is an atonement which the holy and righteous Creator has made to rebellious sinners for the stupendous wrong which *He* inflicted on *them*, by constituting Adam their federal head and representative, and thus involving them in all the direful consequences of the fall. "It is impossible," says the Rev. Richard Watson in his *Theological Institutes*, a standard authority in your Church, "it is impossible to impeach the equity of the Divine procedure, since no man suffers any loss or injury ultimately by the sin of Adam, but by his own willful obstinacy; the abounding grace by

Christ having placed before all men, upon their believing, not merely *compensation* for the loss and injury sustained by Adam, but infinitely higher blessings, both in kind and degree, than were forfeited by him." The unwarrantable notion that God dealt unfairly by us in placing us on trial in the person of our federal head and representative, lies in full sight at the bottom of this reasoning. Take this idea out of the way, and the sentence just quoted has no meaning. The argument of Mr. Watson is to this effect: Mankind sustained a fatal loss and injury through Adam. For this, God Himself is held responsible. To repair the mischief, He sent His only begotten Son into the world; and now, since Christ has died for sinners, it is impossible to impeach the equity of the Divine procedure, ample compensation having been made to our injured race. But suppose that such compensation had not been rendered; suppose that Christ had not died--what then? The inference is plain. In that case, the equity of the Divine procedure might be impeached, and there is no doubt would be impeached, by all Arminians on the face of the earth. Your friend Doctor Foster is very explicit and very decided on this subject. "Sinners," he says,

“were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for this; they cannot escape from corruption, and so are not guilty for remaining in it; and therefore”—such is the decision of the sapient doctor—“therefore they have no guilt whatever because of their corruption.”

“We deny,” such is the language of Dr. Whedon, the able editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, “we deny that God might have brought the whole human race into existence without a Saviour, with a full certainty of eternal death upon the whole.”*

The Methodist-Arminian theory of the fall may then be stated thus: The first transgressors ought to have been cut off, to prevent the propagation of their species; but since they were not cut off, their posterity had a right to demand redress of their Maker. Justice required that a fair compensation should be made, that an adequate remedy should be provided for the wide-spread evils of the grand apostasy. A full and fair compensation was made, an adequate remedy was provided, in the salvation of the Redeemer. And now that these claims have been honorably met, damages paid in full, and

* Methodist Quarterly Review, October, 1861.

losses properly made up, under *such* circumstances it is impossible to impeach the equity of the Divine procedure. Men cannot now reasonably find fault with God. This is Arminianism, pure and simple.

Let us now, for a moment, look at the principle that underlies this theory. A monarch, contrary to every principle of right, deprives a subject of an estate worth a hundred thousand dollars, and compensates him for this act of injustice by giving him, on certain conditions, another estate worth a million. These conditions are, however, so repugnant to his feelings and tastes, that, three chances to one, he will reject the proffered favor, and die at last in abject poverty. It is impossible, according to the Arminian way of thinking, to impeach the equity of this ruler's procedure, since the subject sustains no loss or injury ultimately, except by his own willful obstinacy. He is, it is true, without his consent, stripped of his just rights and possessions; but then, if he can only be brought to accept it, a much larger sum comes into his possession—and thus abundant compensation is rendered. But it might be asked, can a subsequent benefit, however valuable, sanctify a crime? Is it ever right to do evil that good may come? Suppose you rob a man of all

he is worth, and afterwards repay him, with interest—you may make him perfectly satisfied; he may even be thankful for having been robbed; yet this cannot alter the nature of the first act. You may pay principal and interest, doubled and trebled in the bargain; if you deprived him unlawfully of what was his own, you acted on a wrong principle, you did what you had no right to do—you are in truth a robber still.

If God by a questionable act brought the human race into a situation into which it was not right to bring them; if, after placing them on trial in the person of their federal head and representative, He had not the right to leave them to all the consequences of that trial—and Arminians boldly contend that He had not the right—then a wrong of portentous magnitude was perpetrated. No subsequent benefits could change the nature of that wrong. Not all the blessings, temporal and spiritual, bestowed and to be bestowed; not all the grace, common and special, conferred and to be conferred; not even the gift of His only-begotten Son to redeem, nor the gift of the Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify,—could balance the fearful account, or afford a proper compensation to mankind for such a gigantic wrong.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER VII.

DEAR BROTHER :—

METHODIST ministers, it is to be feared, are too apt to accustom their people to look at the salvation of the Redeemer in the light of a compensation. God is the Compensator; the compensated party is the much injured race of Adam; the compensation is the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine, though we search the Bible in vain to find it there, is to the Arminian theologian exceedingly precious, and dear to him as the apple of his eye. Notions so clearly unscriptural we boldly assail, and we as boldly maintain that the work of Christ is not and cannot be, in the proper sense of the term, a compensation. To vast multitudes of our fellow-sinners this so-called compensation is, as a matter of fact, no compensation at all. Men come into the world with dispositions strangely repugnant to the claims of the Divine law. Of this singular repugnance the sinner, of himself, never obtains the mastery. The fatal difficulty begins where moral agency begins, and where

the difficulty begins the compensation ought also to begin. Now if the human race must be compensated for the loss they sustained by the Divine arrangement, it would seem to be but fair that the compensation should in every way be a full and just equivalent. Moral rectitude ought at least to have an equal chance with moral depravity, so that every person might set out on his career not a whit less inclined to good than to evil. Now look at facts. The enmity of the carnal mind is *not* always overcome by grace. The tendency to evil is *not* balanced by an equal tendency to good. The disposition to rebel is *not* balanced by an equal disposition to obey. The love of sin is *not* balanced by an equal love of holiness. With what propriety, then, can you call the gospel scheme of salvation a scheme of compensation? The Apostle Paul declares that we are saved by *grace*. He says nothing about compensation.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER VIII.

DEAR BROTHER :—

I FEAR that you have not calmly considered the serious difficulties which beset your favorite doctrine of compensation. That doctrine strikes at the Divine integrity. All human beings, without exception, are made sinners by the disobedience of the first Adam, but all human beings are not, without exception, made righteous by the obedience of the second Adam. All men are not compensated alike. Look at Moses and Pharaoh, at Peter and Judas, at Saul of Tarsus and his fellow-persecutors on the road to Damascus. But even if the same number of persons were, as a matter of fact, made righteous by the obedience of One, that were made sinners by the disobedience of another; even if all, over whom death reigned by one man's offense, were also to receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, so as to reign in life by one, Jesus Christ, your theory would still be environed with embarrassments of no small magnitude. It simply comes to this, that God inflicted a stupendous

wrong on our race, but that He *graciously* atoned for the wrong by conferring a more stupendous benefit. The manifest violation of the rights of mankind, in holding them responsible for an act to which they did not and could not give their personal assent, would still stand out in bold and terrible relief, and the united acclamations of redeemed humanity would ascend from hearts oppressed with a sense of the Divine injustice.

Remember, my dear brother, *we* do not give utterance to such pernicious sentiments. God forbid that we should stigmatize that great transaction as unfair or unjust. *We* believe, on the contrary, that as the Creator is a Being so absolutely holy that He can by no possibility do wrong, it was perfectly just and right that all men should be represented by Adam, and that all men should by his disobedience be made sinners. And we believe this because the Bible says so. If others are not satisfied with such reasons, if others feel that it is safe to trust their Maker, only just so far as He makes it plain to their apprehension that He has committed no errors, and has done no injustice; if others cannot bring themselves to put confidence in the Divine testimony, until that testimony has

been corroborated by independent proofs from other quarters, we may be sorry for it, but we cannot help it. I repeat, since the Holy Scriptures distinctly set forth the stern truth, that by one man's disobedience all were made sinners, and subjected to the penalty of death, we believe it. And we will, by the blessing of God, rest in the belief of this, in spite of all the wry faces, and upturned noses, and sardonic grins of all the wiseacres, theological and psychological, in the land,—from the Rev. R. S. Foster, hater of Calvinism, to the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, lover of novelties and oddities; and from the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, lover of novelties and oddities, down to the Rev. Theodore Parker, rider of hobbies and preacher of Pantheism; and from this lower deep down to Parker Pillsbury and William Lloyd Garrison, apostles of anarchy and blasphemy.

Calvinists pretend not to a wisdom that man does not possess. We are not backward to acknowledge our incompetence to scan the ways of an Infinite Being—ways which that Being has Himself declared to be past finding out; and a becoming modesty forbids us to think that we can find out what is absolutely beyond the reach of the human understanding. True

science, whether it relates to matter or mind, to this world or the world to come, has its limits; and the genuine philosopher knows where to stop. It is only the quack that is not deterred from attempting impossibilities. A proposal in the *Atlantic Monthly*, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, to start on an expedition to the fixed stars, in one of Prof. Wise's balloons, for the purpose of measuring with a tape line the exact distance between Boston and Sirius, would, without question, be regarded as bordering somewhat on the extravagant. But would such a proposal be more extravagant, or more absurd, than the attempt which is so often made to apply human line and plummet to measure the ways and fathom the thoughts of the Infinite and Eternal God? To the bold voyager, about to undertake so extensive a progress, we would be tempted to say, "Doctor, we admire your courage, but with becoming deference to your enlightened judgment, is there not a natural impossibility in the way of your getting to the Dog Star? Are you sure that you are not buying leagues of tape for nothing? Have you carefully considered the mishaps that might befall you after you got out of sight of the little mundane sphere to which you at present belong?

BUT, seriously, sir, you have undertaken a labor more difficult than a voyage to the regions of space. The old Holy Bible, with its sublime doctrines and its heaven-born principles, is, in your judgment, getting out of date, and you have as good as thrown it aside. You are for an *Americanized* Bible; a Bible that shall give its sanction to the religion set forth in the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,' that is, a Bible with the name of Christ expunged. The talents which God has given you are employed in trying to write down the glorious mysteries of redemption. But, sir, you are wasting quarts of ink and reams of foolscap to no purpose. Your ancestors had a proverb to the effect that only angels and fools attempt what lies beyond the sphere of mortals; angels, because they are angels, and have the requisite faculties; and fools, because they are fools, and know no better. That you sometimes attempt what lies beyond the province of poor ignorant mortals, your writings make it clear enough; and, doctor, that you are not an angel, is just as clear to the majority of your readers."

But to leave the sage of the modern Athens, to whom this passing compliment is due, and to come back to my good brother Peter. We call

no man on earth master. Among our fellows, indeed, we lay claim to a noble independence; but when Jehovah condescends to speak, we humbly desire to know our proper places; and our proper places are the places of little children, who are not yet out of the spelling book, and who must, for a long while to come, take many things on trust and unhesitatingly believe what God says, simply because He says so. Our creed is not only because God has said so and so, *therefore* it must be true, but because He has done so and so, *therefore* it must be right. Such arguments are proof against all sophistry. Here we take our stand; and, standing on these principles, we find that there is a rock beneath our feet. Here also we are very bold, and amid the deafening shouts from a hundred thousand throats, hoarse with vociferations of "injustice!" "cruelty!" "tyranny!" we proclaim, and we would proclaim with sound of trumpet, that God, the holy, the righteous God, though He has in His adorable mercy provided salvation for Adam's lost race, owes compensation to no man on earth.

Here, again, brother, we have the advantage of you. No expression, certainly no cordial expression, of approbation ever escapes from

Arminian lips, when God's dealings with mankind, in the matter of the fall, are placed on their naked merits I could go into the largest Methodist congregation in your city, and, provided they did not know that it was John Smith that addressed them, I might, by setting forth the amazing grace that delivered us from the curse pronounced in Eden, perchance draw out scores and scores of "Amens," some faint, others long and loud, from as many pious hearts. But should I undertake to show that God was acting on a principle just as sound, when all men were constituted sinners by the disobedience of Adam; that He did not go too far, when, on account of the great transgression, sentence of death was passed on Adam's entire posterity; that He might with most perfect justice have left our apostate race to their well deserved fate; that He was in no sense bound to provide a Saviour, and that He owed them *no* compensation,—a dead silence would most likely pervade the assembly. Not a solitary "Amen" would break forth, as an indorsement of these great scriptural truths. Possibly some of my hearers might even go to the length of muttering, "abominable Calvinism!" between their teeth. Let the scene be changed. John

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Smith retires. The Rev. Dr. Foster ascends the pulpit. Now mark the contrast. "Brethren," exclaims the author of "Objections to Calvinism," "brethren, the parent might be to blame for his own sin, but how could a whole race be to blame for the violation of a covenant to which they did not and could not give their assent, and over which they had no more control than the Angel Gabriel? No, my brethren, God could not in justice have left the human race to perish in the ruins of the fall; He was in duty bound to make a fair and righteous compensation, by bestowing a full measure, and an equal share of grace on all mankind." And again the "Amen" and the "Bless the Lords" would be as numerous, as hearty, as long, and loud as at first.

These different styles of preaching represent a striking difference between your doctrinal system and ours. In the Arminian scheme, the fallen human race is creditor and plaintiff; the great Creator, Debtor and Defendant. In the Calvinistic scheme, God Almighty is Creditor and Plaintiff; the depraved and sinful human race, debtor and defendant.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER IX.

DEAR BROTHER:—

YOU have often read and admired David's profound expressions of penitential sorrow, in the Fifty-first Psalm: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Theodore Parker would laugh outright at such a confession. In Dr. Holmes's Americanized religion, a sentiment so unphilosophical could stand no possible chance of a place. The Rev. Dr. Foster, Methodist as he is, would modestly inquire whether a man can be to blame for that over which he had no control—whether it was *his* fault that he was conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity? From such persons, however, this is only natural. Nothing better could be expected of them. The nature of sin is not understood until its power is felt and day-dreams give place to sober realities. It is not until the penetrating light of God's most holy law throws its searching beams on the horrible darkness in which sin enshrouds the understanding, that a human being finds himself to be,

what the Bible says every human being is, dead in trespasses and sins by nature. To such a person the language of David's confession becomes dreadfully clear and intelligible. Then caviling ceases; the consciousness of moral depravity becomes painfully intense; and sneers and grins are succeeded by groans and tears. Such a man would appreciate an Americanized Bible as an astronomer would be likely to appreciate an Americanized sun.

The Holy Scriptures set forth in very striking terms the doctrine of human depravity. This doctrine we both believe. Were I a mere controversialist, I might, perhaps, be tempted to misrepresent your sentiments. But you know me too well, brother, to suppose that I could descend to a practice so little in keeping with the dignity of a minister of the Gospel. I rejoice that this fundamental truth is held in common by us. From the rant of the crazy fanatics who boast of an inner light superior to Revelation, and from the fatal errors of those twin sisters of heresy, Universalism and Unitarianism, our churches are, and God grant that they may ever be, as far removed as zenith from nadir. Let the world know this. We are not enemies. We are brethren. And let it not be

forgotten that it is the errors which your system has engrafted on scriptural truths, and not the scriptural truths of your system, which we feel it our duty to combat. If you Arminians were only willing to acknowledge that it was right for God to do as He did, grace or no grace; if you were only willing to acknowledge that He might with perfect justice have left mankind to perish in the ruins of the fall,—there would be no difference, and there could be no difficulty, between us on this point. But this you will not do. You claim compensation for the loss sustained in Adam. Our feelings of reverence revolt at such a claim, and we are constrained by a strong sense of duty to enter our solemn protest. We are firm believers in salvation by grace, and we can, by a stretch of the imagination, conceive of a salvation by compensation, though the Bible says nothing about it; but that sinners should be saved by compensatory grace or by a gracious compensation, is what we are free to confess we have not the capacity to comprehend. “In the Divine Mind,” says Dr. McClintock, former editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, “our whole race appears as an aggregated unity, as well as a collection of personal individualities.” The curse that was pro-

nounced on Adam was pronounced also on his posterity. The doctor sees no difficulty in this. Why, it might be asked, is there no difficulty? This is his answer: "Since whatever was forfeited in the first Adam has been either restored or compensated for by the second Adam."* Here we have it again—*compensated for* by the second Adam! This is ever the one leading idea of Arminianism. In your theology, some things are suppressed which ought to be brought out to view. It is silently taken for granted that the principle by which the destiny of a race was put in the power of its head and progenitor, was radically wrong; that, inasmuch as a stupendous wrong had been done, God could not, consistently with the dictates of honor and justice, leave mankind in this predicament; that, therefore, justice absolutely demanded for the apostate offspring of an apostate father an adequate remedy and full compensation. All this lies at the bottom of your theory of original sin. Now here we are at variance, and we must continue to be at variance with you. For your theory of compensation we have, we confess, a strong dislike—a dislike rising even to absolute

* Methodist Quarterly Review, April, 1854.

hate. Calvinists can never be brought to believe in salvation by compensation; they are too firmly fixed in the belief of salvation by grace.

This is a topic which, as I have more than once observed, your preachers and writers are apt to touch very lightly. This is emphatically the weak spot, this is the most vulnerable part in their doctrinal system, and they know it well. They seem to go on the principle that the less there is said about it, the better. The Arminian doctrine of compensation, I have sometimes thought, is kept merely as a kind of show. Gilded and varnished, to the unpracticed eye nothing could appear more beautiful. But, like other articles kept for show, it is not meant to be taken down and handled—at least not by rough Calvinistic fingers.

Among the finest illustrations of dodging the question, as it is called, a Methodist brother once gave, when plied with the interrogatory, "What would be the condition of mankind, if the Saviour had not died for them?" "Oh! but He did die, and now all men can be saved!" was the quick reply. "Yes, no doubt He did die for sinners, and all that come to Him will be saved; but suppose He had not died—what then?" "But He *did* die," was again the reply.

“You are not answering my question, Mr. Wilkins; suppose He had *not* died?” “Not a supposable case, for He *did* die for all mankind,” was the rejoinder of Mr. Wilkins. “Was God then under a positive obligation to provide salvation for sinners?” “By no means. He was not under obligation, but He *did* provide salvation for all men.” “Might not God, then, have left all mankind to perish in their sins?” “Certainly not, because Christ died for all men,” was the ready answer of Mr. Wilkins. Here the conversation ended, and here also ends this letter.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER X.

DEAR BROTHER:—

“The Arminian, as fully as the Calvinist, admits the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, in consequence of the fall of our first parents.” This is not my statement; it is the statement of the Rev. Richard Watson, the ablest theologian of your church. This scrip-

tural doctrine has always been a stone of stumbling, but the stumblers were, perhaps, never so numerous as in this nineteenth century. If a little learning in Pope's time used to make a man a fool, how shall we describe the havoc a little science makes of men's sober senses in our times? Shoals of Pelagians more heterodox than Pelagius, Pelagians of the school which believes in a religion without grace, and hopes for a heaven without a Saviour; the school of Fowlers and Wells, of Dr. Bellows and of Dr. Chapin, threaten a general bankruptcy of the faith once delivered to the saints. The mere mention of total depravity is sufficient to decompose the philosophic gravity of these gentlemen. Human nature is quite good enough for them, it needs only the right kind of training to elevate it to perfection. The result is what might be expected; the system of one pretender has a run to-day, and the new-fangled theories of another pretender have a run to-morrow; while, the day following, the dupes of both tie their faith to the leading-strings of a third pretender, taller by a head than his brethren in impudence and audacity. But it is all in vain. The catholicons and panaceas, the elixirs of health and the vaunted cure-alls of the whole

tribe of quack doctors are not more surely destined to go by the board, than are the various patented would-be reliefs that are peddled about by spiritual quacks, male and female, for the behoof of fallen humanity. The Bible declares in emphatic terms, that men are dead in trespasses and sins, and universal history confirms the awful truth. We are of a race deep in love, not with holiness, but with sin. Carrion does not so attract the keen eye and the keener scent of the vulture, the mire and filth of the cess-pool do not so attract the tastes and propensities of the swine, as sin attracts the souls of men, and draws them within its deadly sphere. The poison is infused into every system. The spiritual vision is distorted. Every object is out of its place. A mole-hill shoots into the air and assumes the huge dimensions of a mountain; a mountain dwindles and shrinks to a mole-hill. Shadows flit across the brain and are taken for realities. Fact becomes fiction, and fiction fact. Could rational beings be deluded so by anything but sin? Could anything else so deprave the affections, so darken the understanding, so warp the judgment? Could Dr. Holmes labor under the singular hallucination that *he*, poor man, had a call to Americanize the Bible? Could Wen-

dell Phillips, eloquent in the cause of Jacobinism, keep up his blasphemous tirades? Could Brigham Young the adulterer, and Judge Edmonds the sorcerer, and Parker Pillsbury the apostate, and Theodore Parker the pantheist, be what they are, if the doctrine of total depravity were not founded in truth? When these persons speak, they speak as their nature prompts them. When they act, they act nature. Brigham Young surrounded by the concubines of his harem; Theodore Parker deriding faith and deifying reason; Judge Edmonds nightly consulting the Devil and receiving oracular responses; Pillsbury, Phillips, Garrison and company foaming out ribaldry and atheism as often as the fit takes them—is all perfectly natural.

Let us now come back to the Arminian theory of compensation. This curious theory, examined in the light of *such* facts, appears excessively lame. As long as it is bolstered up between real Gospel truths, it makes out to hobble along; but unsupported in this way, it must sink down in hopeless imbecility. Mr. Watson affirms that we all came into the world with natures totally depraved, and he affirms what is true; but it is not true that ungodly men are compensated for

the loss of original righteousness. Where is the compensation? Is it in the plan of salvation? But that is not a scheme of compensation. If it were, each sinner would be entitled to an equal share with his fellow-sinners. All suffered alike by the fall, and if the represented human race was unfairly dealt with—and there is reason to fear that Arminians too often secretly think so—all would have an equal claim for damages, all would be entitled to an equal compensation. This is one of the plainest dictates of common sense, and as the Bible and common sense go hand in hand, it would also be one of the plainest dictates of the Bible if it meant to set forth such a doctrine. But such an idea it is just as impossible to find there as it is to find the term itself. With *grace*, indeed, rich, amazing, infinite *grace*, the Scriptures do in truth overflow, but of compensation they know nothing whatsoever. Now to a share of grace, no sinner, be he who he may, can possibly have a valid claim, otherwise grace is no more grace. I say it in all kindness, but it is one of the many blunders which you Arminians commit, to call compensation grace, and grace compensation; words standing for things as wide apart as the poles. The grand scheme of redemption

is founded in the undeserved mercy and goodness of God; why then do your preachers put it into the heads of the people, that justice requires compensation to be made to the posterity of fallen Adam? Do you not see that the compensation, even in your view of it, does not cover the loss? Some are indeed unspeakable gainers. To them that receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, so as to reign in life by Jesus Christ, the loss is more, vastly more than made up. But do all men receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness? Will all men reign in life? Did Voltaire, did Volney, did Gibbon, did Hume, did Thomas Paine, did Mirabeau, did Danton, did Robespierre, infidels all, receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness? and is there reason to believe that those bitter scoffers are now reigning in life with Jesus Christ?

On your scheme, the most hardened sinner could put in a plea against God himself: "O Lord, my rights were invaded before I was born, and, therefore, I reject all offers of compensation; I demand to be reinstated in my original rights; I commit many sins, I acknowledge, but as these flow from a nature essentially corrupt, the guilt must not lie at my door. Why was I born with

such a nature? I have been misused. It is true that I have a chance of being saved; a Saviour has been provided; compensation has been made: but I do not choose to accept the compensation; I will stand on my rights." There are but few men, even the most audacious in wickedness, who would venture on such a style of address; and yet this is just the style of that very popular book among Methodists, Foster's "Objections to Calvinism." On the one hundred and sixty-sixth page of that most singular work, we find the following declaration: "Sinners were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for this; they cannot escape from corruption, and so are not guilty for remaining in it; and, therefore, they have no guilt whatever because of their corruption." What words of comfort! how cheering! how very precious! In acknowledgment of a doctrine so full of consolation, Parker Pillsbury might say: "My lusts were so strong, and my depravity in general so great, that Christianity lost its last hold on me, and I tumbled into the blind vortex of atheism. But as I was born corrupt, the Rev. R. S. Foster, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, informs me that I cannot be guilty for this. Many thanks for the information." Oliver Wendell Holmes

might say with truth: "My pride and self-sufficiency were so inveterate that I was simple enough to propose to emasculate the Holy Scriptures, in order to give my countrymen an Americanized Bible. But insomuch as my pride and self-conceit were born with me, good, orthodox Dr. Foster has most conclusively shown that I cannot be guilty for this." Judge Edmonds might say: "I despised the sacred teachings of God's infallible word, and, attempting to pry into things not given to mortals to know, fell into the snare of Satan. The result was those shocking falsehoods with which I deceived others and was deceived myself. But as I was born with such propensities, and simply obeyed the dictates of my corrupt nature, that excellent and most trustworthy Arminian doctor, Dr. Foster, insists that I cannot be guilty for this." But how the doctrine laid down by Mr. Watson in his *Theological Institutes*—"The Arminian, as fully as the Calvinist, admits the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, in consequence of the fall of our first parents,"—is to be reconciled with the doctrine laid down by Mr. Foster in his *Objections to Calvinism*—"Sinners were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for this; they cannot escape from corruption, and so are

not guilty for remaining in it; and, therefore, they have no guilt whatever because of their corruption,"—how these two conflicting statements are to be reconciled with each other, is a problem which I would respectfully hand over to your next General Conference, for solution.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XI.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE delineation of character in the Bible, like everything else found there, is perfect. Only men of genius, or inspired men, could have drawn those master-pieces. All antiquity had but one Homer, and modern Christendom has not furnished three writers able to sketch such life-like characters as we have in the Scriptures. Memoirs by the dozen are annually thrown before the public; but which of them delineate, with perfect truth and impartiality, real men and real women? Look at *Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit*, a work of merit, the labor of more than one cultivated mind, the labor of years. Com-

pare now with these the biographical sketches of the Bible. Here the subjects did not sit for their likeness, prim and stiff and starched, combed and dressed up for the occasion; they were taken just as they appeared in every-day life. The deformities as well as the excellencies, what was good and what was bad, the striking faults and the striking virtues, are all before us. We blush to hear Abram tell a lie; we are shocked to see Noah drunk; we stand confounded at the flagrant adultery of David; Peter's fall, and the cowardice of James and John take us by surprise; and we wonder at Paul and Barnabas getting into a quarrel. Unlike modern character-mongers, the Bible presents us with one and but one perfect portrait, and that portrait is perfect only because the Great Original was absolutely perfect.

Equally clear and correct is the picture of human nature in general. The outlines are bold and distinct; the touches remarkably simple and striking, representing the thing itself to the life. The whole is of a dark and gloomy aspect. Men do not love God. They refuse to put their trust in Him. They neglect His glory. There is no desire to please Him, and while His favor has no attractions, His wrath inspires no

dread. Rebellion is the rule, obedience the exception; and the exception has its root, never in nature, but always in grace. Native-born, loving and obedient children, there are absolutely none. All are children of disobedience by habit, by the force of example, and, by what is more powerful than habit or example, *by nature*. In search of happiness, the bowels of the earth are torn open, the ocean's depths are sounded, the blue vault of the sky is pierced; but happiness is nowhere to be found. The whole universe, in all its lengths and breadths, in all its heights and depths, is not of dimensions vast enough to fill the fatal void effected by the agency of sin. Such is fallen human nature.

The Arminian theory virtually makes God the author of all this evil. Arminians themselves would, indeed, repel such a charge. This is readily conceded, but the theory that underlies the doctrine of compensation is obnoxious to this grave charge. Pelagianism and naturalism, whose God is not our holy Lord God, reject the doctrine of original sin, and, as a matter of course, reject the arguments by which it is established. You, on the other hand, receive the doctrine, but impugn, not directly, but indirectly, the Divine goodness and justice.

Arminians profess to hold, in the fullest sense, the depravity of human nature, and then with strange inconsistency contend that men are not to blame for their depravity. But surely somebody must be to blame for such a fearful state of things. There is guilt, deep guilt somewhere. Totally depraved, yet without guilt! A race of totally depraved innocent creatures! This sounds odd enough. But listen to what the Rev. Dr. Foster has to say on this point. He is boldly contending that every human being is entitled to a share of grace, and takes the sinner's part in the following style: "Let it not be said he (the sinner) brought this disability upon himself. If this were so, it would relieve the case. But this is not the fact. This disability came with him into the world, it was communicated as a part of his existence, it was his very and essential nature. And now was he to blame for an existence and nature which were forced on him; which he never, at any period, consented to, and which he never could avoid?"* This is certainly very plain talk. Theodore Parker could hardly beat it. Natural depravity and rebellion against God have found an able

* Objections to Calv. Art. Effectual Calling.

champion and a fearless defender in Dr. Foster. Let us look at facts. Rebellion against Heaven's High King has been inaugurated on a tremendous scale in our planet. The rebellion has its root and origin in the awful depravity of the heart. Men are rebels from fixed choice. Their whole souls turn away with loathing from the hateful rule of their rightful Lord and Sovereign. In this they are warmly defended. "Had they anything whatever to do in making that corrupt nature?" asks the author of "Objections to Calvinism." Thus the sinner, it seems, is not even to take to himself the smallest share of guilt. He is spotless as innocence itself. "Was he to blame for an existence and nature which were forced on him?" This is a very significant question. A corrupt nature *forced* on the poor sinner! Who, then, according to Dr. Foster, *is* to blame for this depraved nature? Be astonished, O ye heavens, it is no other than God himself! Thus God is virtually made the author of sin by the advocates of Arminianism.

What Dr. Foster's real sentiments are I cannot tell; but when he has Calvinism to fight against, he stoutly maintains that there is nothing worthy of blame in the desperate enmity of the carnal

mind against the holiness of God. Now he either believes that we are guilty for being corrupt and depraved, or he does not. If he believes that we *are* guilty for being depraved and corrupt, he is not an honest man, because he argues against his own belief. If he believes that we are *not* guilty for being depraved and corrupt, he makes God the author of sin.

Do you say that the Methodist Church ought not to be answerable for the absurdities and extravagancies of one man? But is not his work printed at one of your Book Concerns? Has it not the indorsement of one of your bishops? And is it not found lying in the book-case of every Methodist preacher? So that, after all, Mr. Foster stands not alone in this matter. He is one of a multitude. Not all the steam-presses in America could print the endless harangues, the tropes, the rant and fustian delivered from Arminian pulpits against Calvinists, for maintaining that human nature, fallen and depraved, is guilty, dreadfully guilty before God. Why is it that we are to be so abused, because we charge home on *men* themselves and *not* on God, the guilt where it belongs? I will close this letter by asking another question: Did you ever know or hear of a Methodist min-

ister, either in this country or in Europe, or in any other quarter of the globe, who has been known to proclaim, openly and honestly to the world, that human depravity is but another name for human guilt, and that God might with perfect righteousness have left the whole race to perish without a Saviour? If such a Methodist minister is anywhere to be found, I would be most happy to make his acquaintance.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

“As we sinned only seminally in Adam, if God had not intended our redemption, His goodness would have engaged Him to destroy us seminally, by crushing the capital offender who contained us all, so there would have been a just proportion between the sin and punishment.”* So says the Rev. John Fletcher, one of the great lights of Arminian Methodism.

* Third Check. Vol. i. p. 146.

“Had Christ not undertaken human redemption, we have no proof, no indication in Scripture, that for Adam’s sin any but the actually guilty pair would have been doomed to condemnation.” So says the Rev. Richard Watson, a standard theologian of your denomination. “Had not God provided a Redeemer, He no doubt would have terminated the whole mortal story, by cutting off the original transgressors.” So says Dr. Adam Clarke, whom all Methodists delight to honor. These writers, when they say this, seem to think that they have taken a short cut through a tangled thicket. Instead, however, of relieving the difficulty, the short cut leads to a trackless wilderness. We see here the shifts to which able minds, overlooking the plain teachings of the Bible, are reduced. The doctrine taught in these quotations is, that mankind were not in reality represented by Adam. If Adam fell, we were not to come into existence at all, we were to remain a mere nonentity, a mere nothing. But how could sin be imputed to mere nonentity, to mere nothing? How could death pass on mere nonentity, on mere nothing? Sometimes you maintain that the whole human race were represented by Adam as their federal head, and

were like him exposed to death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. "The first consequence," says Mr. Watson, "of this imputation is the death of the body, to which all the descendants of Adam are made liable, and that on account of the sin of Adam. . . . The second consequence is death *spiritual*, that moral state which arises from the withdrawment of that intercourse of God with the human soul, in consequence of its becoming polluted. . . . The third consequence is *eternal death*, separation from God and endless banishment from His glory in a future state." At other times you are ready to ask, in the language of Mr. Foster, "How can we be to blame for a sin committed thousands of years ago by our ancestor? How could we be justly exposed to punishment for that to which we did not and could not give our assent, and over which we had no more control than the Angel Gabriel?" How, it may be asked, does it happen that the same denomination believes that it would be the height of injustice to permit a whole race to come into the world totally depraved and corrupt, on account of Adam's sin, and that a whole race does, nevertheless, as a matter of fact, come into the world totally depraved and corrupt, on account of Adam's sin?

The glaring inconsistency of this is known and felt, and to any but an Arminian the difficulties of adjustment would appear insurmountable. The fertility of Arminian ingenuity has, however, devised a most ingenious solution of the difficulty. Grace brings a race of sinners into existence, which justice required to be left, and which justice, had not mercy interfered, would actually have left in non-existence. But for the Saviour Adam and Eve would have been the only sinners in the world. He died, and the result has been literally a world full of sinners. The advent of the Redeemer had, as your theory indicates, a twofold design : first to bring a non-existent race of totally depraved creatures into being, and then to save as many as possible of these depraved creatures, who otherwise would never and could never have been depraved creatures at all. Justice would have annihilated the posterity of Adam. Grace reproduced Adam's posterity, and reproduced them a race of sinners, with the offer of pardon and life set before them. Grace makes all men sinners, in order to make it possible for all men to be saved. It is something like this : Suppose a man that has violated no law, and done no wrong, should be sentenced to die on the gal-

lows. Suppose further, however, that a knife is put in the hand of this innocent person, and that he is told, "Sir, you have been sentenced to die an ignominious death on the scaffold before you. It is true, indeed, that you have done nothing to merit such a punishment, but still you have no right to impeach the goodness and integrity of the court, since there is a chance for you to cut the rope with this knife, and to run for your life." This is a simple, and not unfair illustration of the Arminian theory of the fall. The human race are in strict justice innocent, absolutely innocent of the sin of Adam. Dr. Foster's wrath is stirred, and he indignantly asks how we could be to blame for a sin committed by another before we were born. The sin of Adam is, nevertheless, imputed to all mankind. The consequence is that the race, by hundreds and thousands of millions, comes into the world with bodies doomed to the grave, with souls already dead in sin, and in imminent and awful danger of eternal damnation. A Saviour has been provided for those who ought never to have been permitted to come into the world; and your writers and preachers maintain that *now* no man has a right to impeach the Divine justice, a way of escape from im-

pending ruin being opened to all. Permit me to set forth the inconsistencies of the Arminian theory on this subject by another illustration. A multitude of poor wretched creatures find themselves in a dark and noisome dungeon. A door of escape from the dreadful prison stands wide open. Now it certainly makes some difference, whether the dungeon is built for the sake of the door of escape, or the door of escape is made for the sake of the dungeon. You hold the former, we believe in the latter. It certainly makes some difference also, whether the miserable inmates are entirely free of guilt, and are thrust into prison merely for the purpose of giving them a chance to make good their escape, or whether the law finds them really guilty and deserving punishment. Arminians take the former ground, we take the latter. We contend that the Divine law found the whole race of Adam guilty, grace or no grace, salvation or no salvation. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men, for that all have sinned." So say the Scriptures, and the Scriptures cannot err. The law of God, who is a Being infinitely righteous and infinitely wise, would never, no never, have passed sentence of condemnation on all

the generations of Adam, had such a sentence been in any proper sense unjust in itself. It must have been right and just that all mankind should be made sinners by the disobedience of one man, or the Holy Ghost would never have asserted the astounding fact. Let God be true and every man a liar. On this rock we build an impregnable fortress. The fact that I, or you, or Mr. Foster, or Dr. Whedon, or this philosopher, or that theologian, cannot grasp this subject, is little to the point. The administration of this world, we should never forget, is safely lodged in the hands of Him who does nothing but what is right, and who in tones of lofty rebuke says to us all, "Be still and know that I am God;" "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XIII.

DEAR BROTHER :—

THIS letter, which shall not be a long one, will be a letter of parallelisms. According to the Scriptures, Christ came to save sinners, who not only actually existed, but who would have been in actual existence had He never condescended to lay down His life for them. According to Arminianism, Christ came to save sinners, who, had He not laid down His life, would never have been sinners at all, because they never would have been brought into existence. The fundamental idea of the Bible is, that the mysterious dispensation under which all men were made sinners was, independently of grace, a righteous dispensation. The fundamental idea of Arminianism is, that the dispensation under which all men were made sinners was *not*, independently of grace, a righteous dispensation. The fundamental idea of Scripture is, that Jesus came to save sinners, who would certainly have existed, and who would as certainly have been lost, had He not shed His blood for them. The

fundamental idea of Arminianism is, that Christ died for sinners, who but for His death would never in fact have existed ; and who, having no existence, could not possibly be lost. According to the Scriptures, all men would have perished had not Christ died. According to Arminianism, if Christ had not died, none, except Adam and Eve, would have perished. According to the teachings of the Bible, the Saviour died for real sinners. According to the teachings of Arminianism, Christ died for real sinners too, but they had, in the first instance, to be brought into existence as sinners, by grace.

Let me now, my brother, apply the Arminian theory, by way of interpretation, to the fifth chapter of Romans. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and death ought to have passed on him alone, since he alone was guilty ; nevertheless, by grace, death passed also on all men, for, through grace, all have sinned. For as by one man's disobedience, only that man himself could, on all the principles of justice and right, be regarded as a sinner, nevertheless, through grace, all men were also made sinners. Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came in reality only on himself,

and could come only on himself, in accordance with all the requirements of simple, straightforward justice; yet by grace, through the offense of one, judgment actually came also upon all men unto condemnation. Thus, if it were not for grace, there would be no sin in the world, because there would be no sinners; and there would be no sinners, because, as you argue, the human race would never have been permitted to exist at all. Thus we see what grace, in the Arminian view of it, has done for mankind. Nor is this all that grace has accomplished; all the wicked acts perpetrated in the world are likewise due to grace, in accordance with the well-known Arminian axiom, that where there is no grace bestowed, there can be no responsibilities. By grace, then, men do good, and by grace they do evil. By grace they glorify God, and by grace they serve the Devil. By grace Moses was the deliverer of Israel, and by grace Pharaoh was their persecutor and oppressor. By grace Peter was an Apostle, and by grace Judas was an apostate. By grace Luther was a reformer, and by grace Voltaire was a blasphemer. By grace Richard Baxter was the author of the "Saint's Rest," and by grace the Rev. Dr. R. S. Foster is the author of "Objections to Calvinism."

The different views of human nature taken by Calvinists, Arminians, and Pelagians furnish an interesting subject of speculation. According to Pelagianism, men are sinners only by practice. According to Calvinism, men are sinners by practice and by nature. According to Arminianism, men are sinners by practice, by nature, and by grace.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XIV.

DEAR BROTHER:—

IT is the peculiar glory of the great system of truth styled Calvinism, that it exalts the Divine attributes of justice and mercy. In our theology, GOD is on the throne. The creature is taught to know his place. The sinner, unworthy to lift his eyes from the ground, stands self-convicted in the presence of Infinite Holiness, and humbly sues for pardon. In our ears the thunders of Sinai roll with a majesty more awful, the dying accents of the mighty Sufferer on Calvary have a richer and sweeter tone, and salvation has a depth and comprehensiveness of

meaning greater by far than is known to any other theological system. We stand amazed at God's unmerited goodness; we cannot comprehend how He could be moved to pity for a race so sunk in depravity and guilt. To many, our expressions of wonder, love, and praise appear extravagant and even foolish. It is not, however, difficult to account for this. By salvation we mean one thing and they mean another thing. Between the Atlantic Ocean and a mill pond the difference is very great; but the difference is not so great as the vast interval between the grace of the Bible and the grace held forth in certain modern pulpits.

This illustration recalls the scenes of childhood. You cannot have forgotten, brother, the pond near our father's house, which we boys used to call the Pacific Ocean. It was certainly a very big name for a very little body of water. Do you remember the sea captain who once stayed in the family some two or three days, and entertained us so much with an account of his voyages? While he was portraying the grandeur of the mighty Pacific, we were all the while thinking on our frog pond. When, in glowing language, he described the enormous swell of mountain waves threatening to engulf his ship,

our pine shingle craft scudding over the ripples of our little ocean was before us; the monstrous whales and sharks of which he spoke reminded us of our polliwogs and tadpoles; and while he talked about depths which the longest line had never measured—why, we could touch the bottom of *our* Pacific, anywhere, with a broom-handle.

That frog pond furnishes a striking and useful analogy. There are men in whose view nothing is infallible except their own judgments. Where their reason falters, all reason stops; when their lead has touched bottom, there are no depths beyond. Such persons regard themselves specially qualified to sit in judgment on the ways of God, and authoritatively to pronounce what belongs to Him and what does not belong to Him; what He may do and what He may not do. At the head of this set of profound thinkers stands the ex-reverend Ralph Waldo Emerson, the worshiper and echo of Thomas Carlyle; nor does he stand alone. The mention of such a name readily supplies the imagination with a long line of worthies, ex-reverend and ex-Christian, male and female, with now and then a so-called reverend and so called Christian, whose frog pond casts the Pacific Ocean altogether into the background.

But to come back from figure. Do not suppose that I am classing Arminian Methodists with such errorists. This I would not dare to do. But there is one thing I do not hesitate to do; I do not hesitate to charge you with giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, our common Master. We never take sides with them against you; I wish I could say that you never take sides with them against us. That persons ignorant of the Scriptures and of the power of God, that the declaimers, who from week to week advertise specches called sermons, to be preached for clap-trap, because they have nothing to say about a crucified and exalted Redeemer, should set a low value, or no value at all, on the grace of God, is not at all surprising. The stream cannot well rise higher than its source. We do not look for salvation by grace in the harangues of the Rev. M. D. Conway, "liberal Unitarian," nor in those of the Rev. Dr. Chapin, "liberal Universalist," and we do not expect much in the discourses of the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, "liberal Congregationalist," who delights to hold sweet communion with the haters of orthodoxy. But the world has a right to look for better things from a denomination that claims to be founded in grace itself.

In spite of this claim, however, it is a peculiar feature of Arminianism that salvation is not so much a matter of wonder as a matter of course. It is just what might have been and ought to have been expected. It would rather be a wonder if there were no Saviour. The fact that this planet is peopled by an order of creatures dead in trespasses and sins, is, according to your way of thinking, of itself a sufficient reason to expect that something should be done for them. In the Arminian code, the fall of man and the redemption of Christ sustain the relation of cause and effect. They are inseparably and necessarily connected, so that the one cannot be regarded as existing without the other. We hold, indeed, that if there were no fallen men, there would be no Redeemer; but you hold, also, that if there were no Redeemer, there would be no fallen men. The work of Adam and the work of Christ you look upon as two inseparable parts of a grand whole. The work of Christ, it is true, you designate to be a work of grace, but it is grace which both the honor of God and strict justice required should not be withheld. This is strange enough. You might, with the same show of reason, maintain that the miasm which engenders chill fever,

and quinine which breaks the chills, are to be regarded as necessary parts of each other. The disease and the remedy, sin and grace, rebellion and pardon, one and inseparable!

Let us look a little longer on this. If there were no sinners, there would be no Saviour; this is what both you and we believe. If there were no Saviour, there would also be no sinners; this is what only you and not we believe. If there were no bodily diseases in the world, there would be no physicians; this represents Calvinism. If there were no physicians in the world, there would be no bodily diseases; this represents Arminianism. "Had not God provided a Redeemer," says Dr. Clarke, "He would have finished the whole mortal story, by cutting off the original transgressors." But God did provide a Saviour, and the mortal story, with its dreadful tale of sin and suffering, has been continued to the present hour. Had no Saviour been provided, there would be no sinners. A Saviour has been provided, and the sands of the sea cannot equal the number of rebels and sinners, whose crimes and misdeeds have cursed the earth. But if the fall of man and redemption by Christ are to be viewed as two inseparable parts of a stupendous whole; if the former

is never to be contemplated except in connection with the latter; if justice demanded that salvation must be provided for a race of lost sinners; if God must send His Son; if Christ must die to make compensation for the loss sustained by Adam,—what, I ask, what becomes of the great doctrine of salvation by grace? If I were an Arminian, I do not see how I could celebrate in terms of lofty praise the goodness and mercy of God. The farthest I could go, I think, would be to say, “We are indeed born with natures depraved and corrupt, but we have now no right to complain, since compensation has been made by thine only begotten Son for the loss sustained by Adam. We thank Thee for this act of justice. But if Thou hadst left us where, by putting us on trial in our federal head, Thou didst permit us to be brought; if Thou hadst not made good this loss; if compensation had not been rendered; if Thou hadst left mankind to perish in their sins,”—brother, I dare not address my holy Sovereign in the language of the Arminian creed; you dare not, your writers and preachers dare not do it. I may be mistaken, but I will venture the assertion that even Dr. Foster himself dares not do it.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XV.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE Rev. John Jones is, by the appointment of your Conference, one of my clerical neighbors. With agreeable manners, he seems to possess also good qualities of mind and heart. His talents, however, he himself appears to think shine to the best advantage in the line of controversy; and whenever this brother feels like exercising his talents at sharp shooting, Calvinism is commonly the favorite target. Many an arrow dipped in gall he lets fly, on such occasions, against election, against predestination, against the perseverance of the saints, against the Divine sovereignty; but the strongest bow is bent, the bitterest arrow is adjusted, the deadliest aim is directed against "the horrible doctrine of infant damnation." If the Rev. Mr. Jones stood alone in this matter, if he were the only one among his brethren that resorted to such tricks, his name would not appear at the head of this letter. He is, however, only one of many. Such tricks are, it is to be feared, but too well known to the majority of

Methodist preachers. When Unitarians or Universalists strive to excite odium against our doctrines, wicked as are their aims, there is at least no inconsistency in their wickedness. They are known and recognized as enemies of the cross of Christ. The doctrines of redemption are to them little better than doctrines of humbug. Even the salvation of adults, in their creeds, requires little or no grace; the salvation of infants, absolutely none at all. Now it has been often remarked that the spiritual guides in your church seldom, some of them never, take to task the errorists who claim salvation for infants, *not* as a matter of pure grace, but as a matter of simple justice. If fault is found at all, it is in soft and honeyed phrase; while neither Webster nor Worcester can furnish all the adjectives and nouns set in array against Calvinists for believing that infants, like adults, are lost, and can be saved only by God's unspeakable mercy. This secret sympathy with the enemies of grace, and this vituperation of the advocates of grace, has long been a reproach to the Methodist Episcopal ministry. A Universalist champion, setting out to attack the Calvinistic doctrine of infant salvation, should he run short of arguments, has but to

borrow the logic and rhetoric of the nearest Methodist pulpit; or, if he desires to see how his own sentiments look in print, the writings of the Rev. Peter Cartwright, or of the Rev. Dr. R. S. Foster, will furnish rich and striking specimens.

A few evenings ago Mr. Jones and I met at the table of a common friend, where the conversation turned on the salvation of infants. As Mr. Hill, our host, though a class-leader, was not aware of the inconsistencies of the Arminian creed, I proposed to Mr. Jones that he should favor us with his views on the point in dispute. To this he readily agreed, and began thus: "I believe, or rather I know, that all infants are saved through the atonement of Christ, because it would be clearly unjust that they should be lost. I read in my Bible, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven'—for of such is the kingdom of Heaven," he repeated, with a peculiar twinkle of the eye; "that, brother Smith, does not sound much like infants, not a span long, in hell." To Mr. Hill, who had often listened to such arguments without perceiving their fallacy, this mode of reasoning seemed perfectly conclusive. In order to expose

the glaring contradiction involved in maintaining that an atonement was made for those that were not lost, I inquired if infants were in themselves innocent and pure. "By no means," replied Mr. Jones; "all infants fell in their great forefather, but Christ died to take away original sin, and it would be shocking injustice to hold them answerable for the sin of Adam." How it could be just that infants should fall in Adam, and how it could be at the same time shockingly unjust to hold them answerable for the sin of Adam—sheer contradiction as it was—evidently appeared to be no contradiction in the view of the Rev. Mr. Jones. "There is one point," I continued, "on which I should like to have your opinion. Do you really think that it was just that infants should fall in Adam, and come into the world with natures depraved and corrupt?" "Yes," was the reply; "because Christ was to make an atonement." "But suppose no atonement had been made—would it have been just in that case?" Mr. Jones evidently did not like to answer my question in this naked form; but, on being pressed, at length said: "No, it would not have been just." "Do you believe, then, Mr. Jones, that infants are saved by grace?" "I do," said he. "You affirm," I

continued, "that infants are saved by grace—and you also affirm that, according to the principles of justice, they could never be lost. Now will you be so good as to explain what you mean by infants being saved by grace? Would it not be as well to strike out the word *grace* and insert the word *justice*?" My clerical neighbor seemed somewhat nettled by these interrogatories, and, to make the matter worse, Mr. Hill interposed with another question: "Brother Jones, is it really a doctrine held by the Methodist Episcopal Church, that infants are born with natures totally depraved?" The reply was in the affirmative, accompanied by a significant look that seemed to say: "Brother Hill, I wish you would mind your own business." Our host seemed to think that he was minding his own business, and proposed a second question, "Why should infants come into the world with natures totally depraved?" A feeling of impatience seemed to come over Mr. Jones, who answered, in a very curt manner, "Because they fell in Adam." "But why, brother Jones, should they fall in Adam? Could they help this? Has not Dr. Foster, in his unanswerable book, forever settled this question? He says that Adam may have been to blame for his own

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sin; but how, the doctor asks, can his posterity be to blame for that over which they had no more control than the Angel Gabriel? And did you not, on last Sabbath, in refuting Calvinism, assert that we had no more to do with Adam's sin than the man in the moon?" "Have I not told you," rejoined Mr. Jones, "that Christ died for the salvation of all infants?" "I know you did; but let us suppose that Christ had not died—what then?" "But Christ did die," was the sharp rejoinder. This reply, or perhaps the tone in which it was uttered, seemed to satisfy Mr. Hill, but it did not satisfy me. "The inconsistencies in the Arminian creed, gentlemen," said I, "never appeared so striking to my mind as they do this evening. It was just, according to Arminianism, that infants should fall; and, according to Arminianism, it was not just. According to Arminianism, infants are saved by grace; and, according to Arminianism, if God did not save infants by grace, He would be, to quote the dreadful language of John Wesley and Mr. Foster, an Almighty Tyrant. Be consistent, Mr. Jones; drop the term grace altogether, and say at once that justice—absolute justice—secures the salvation of infants, and that infants would have been just as certainly saved,

if Christ had not laid down his life for them." Mr. Jones, instead of replying to these objections, suddenly rose from the table, looked at his watch, and remarked that he had almost forgotten an engagement to be fulfilled at that very moment.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XVI.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE ground on which the doctrine of infant salvation rests ought to be thoroughly explored. There are few doctrines so imperfectly understood. Church members could be counted by the thousand, who have never given themselves the trouble to find out what the Scriptures teach concerning this matter. It is this want of investigation on the part of the people that gives your preachers, in some respects, the advantage both of those who, like the Universalists and Socinians, reject grace altogether, and of those whose system like ours is founded wholly in grace. Nor are some of your brethren slow to

avail themselves of this advantage. Justice, says the Universalist, simple justice calls for the salvation of infants. By grace, says the Calvinist, and by grace alone, are infants saved. The Methodist Arminian adopts the sentiments of the Universalist, but borrows the language of the Calvinist, and stoutly maintains, in defiance of all consistency, that infants are saved *both by justice and by grace*. In the Universalist scheme, grace is quietly dropped, and infants are saved purely by justice. On the Arminian plan, infants are saved either justly by grace, or graciously by justice. These two systems, separated by a very wide interval in other respects, here approach each other and almost touch. To invert the ordinary rule of comparison, the difference between Universalism and Arminianism on this subject is the difference between the Rev. Dr. E. C. Chapin and the Rev. Dr. R. S. Foster. Dr. Chapin, Universalist, would boldly inculcate on his Maker the duty of saving infants on the simple ground of justice. Dr. Foster, Methodist, not a whit less bold, would inform his Maker that He was bound to save the race of infants by grace; while both the Universalist doctor and the Arminian doctor would claim the liberty to call

God an infinite tyrant to His face, if He did not save infants either by justice or by grace.

You will not for a moment suppose, my brother, that I put you and your brethren on a level with a class of religionists who might as well take refuge in Deism at once; for Universalism is little better than Deism. But it cannot be denied that Universalists have here the advantage of Arminians; for if God could not justly leave infants to the consequences of Adam's transgression, it is clear as day that the Universalist and not the Methodist is right. To talk about infants being saved by grace, if justice demands their salvation, is really to talk nonsense. Who ever thinks of calling the payment of an honest debt the conferring of a special favor? Who ever dreams of designating the cancelling of an obligation the bestowal of a free gift? And yet the salvation of infants is represented by Arminians as a heavy debt most justly due, which a just God discharges by *grace*!

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XVII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

SINCE I wrote my last letter, the Rev. Mr. Jones has preached another sermon on the salvation of children dying in infancy. After the congregation was dismissed, the following conversation took place between two members of the Methodist Church: “Well, doctor, did not the Calvinists receive a pretty severe handling this evening?” “So they did, madam, but it strikes me that brother Jones would have done as well had he given us reasons, instead of so many loose assertions. Suppose that Calvinists do, as he says, believe in the damnation of infants, I do not see how this relieves the difficulties that beset our own system. I must own that I am disappointed, for I expected to hear a series of calm and dignified arguments to remove the objections which Mr. Smith urges against the Arminian theory.” “Dr. Blackstone, don’t you think that brother Jones can easily answer all the objections which Mr. John Smith can bring forward against our doctrines?” “That may be, but it is certain that he did not

do so this evening. I am not a theologian, but Mr. Jones is a theologian, and as he gave out word that he would answer all objections brought against our views of grace, I supposed that he would make good his promise." "What are these great objections, doctor? Pray, tell me. Did not brother Jones make it perfectly plain that all infants are saved by grace, in opposition to Pelagians and Socinians; and did he not make it just as plain, in opposition to the Calvinists, that God would be an Almighty Tyrant if He did not save infants by grace? Is there any difficulty in all this? To my mind, this subject never was made to appear in so clear a light before." "On the contrary, to my mind, madam, this subject never appeared so dark before. To speak the truth, the theory of our church looks like a sheer contradiction, and the longer I fix my attention on it, the more striking the contradiction appears. Brother Jones, quoting from our last Christian Advocate, showed the absurdity of the doctrine that infants were really involved in ruin for Adam's sin; this being so, with what propriety can infants be said to be saved by grace? How is it possible that they are saved by grace, if they were never in reality lost?

What has grace to do with their salvation? And is Mr. Smith far out of the way, when he tells us we had better drop the term grace altogether, when we speak about the salvation of infants?" Here the conversation was broken off. The next day, Dr. Blackstone politely requested me to state on paper our views of infant salvation. I did so, and I inclose a copy of the letter I sent him.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XVIII.

DR. W. C. BLACKSTONE.

MY DEAR SIR:—I cheerfully comply with your request, and will come at once to the subject. Facts and sound theology are never discordant. It is a fact, attested by the constant experience of every generation, that the human soul is from the first in a corrupt and depraved state. Without a solitary exception, the entire mass of humanity has been penetrated and permeated by the virus of sin. No point, however far back, can be reached in the personal history

of any individual, where the evil did not already exist. When moral agency begins, moral depravity has already begun, and it is, without figure, in all that concerns human responsibility ubiquitous. It is present with our first words, it accompanies our first acts, it taints our first desires, it vitiates our first motives. Nor can any amount of favorable circumstances, any kind or degree of cultivation, any training intellectual, physical, or religious, avail with the young immortal to shake off the dreadful incubus, which, like a malignant spirit, fastens its hold on him, and makes a part of himself wherever he goes. These are stern facts. To reject them can do no possible good; and, on the other hand, wickedly to impugn the righteousness of God is as fruitless as the impotent rage of the viper biting against a file.

The Holy Scriptures, when they solemnly declare that we are by *nature* dead in trespasses and sins, and by *nature* the children of wrath, simply confirm what universal history—the history of every nation, ancient and modern, barbarian and civilized; the history of every family, great and small; the history of every individual, noble and common, imperial and servile—teaches and has always taught. We might, indeed, be

living in a world where sin and misery were not even known by name; where generation after generation of beings like us would be born innocent, and holy, and pure; where, as the infantile faculties were unfolded, each dear little heart would be found a most lovely mirror, reflecting in perfection the image of the blessed Creator, and where, in the constant progress of development, the affections and motives would be expressed by language and actions void of the faintest trace of selfishness and sin. It would no doubt be very pleasant to live in such a world; but it is not the world to which we belong. We can, indeed, by a stretch of the imagination, bring before our minds the picture of such a human race, but everybody knows that it is not the real human race, the race that is actually born, that actually lives, moves, and dies on this planet.

But where is the philosophy that is to solve the awful mysteries of this theme? It is all in the Bible. Mere human wisdom teaches that God created men just as they now are, selfish and depraved. A theory, which so palpably makes God the author of sin, we indignantly reject. It is not possible that a race of intelligent, responsible agents should be *created*

morally corrupt and unholy. God does not *now* create. Creation, so far as this world is in question, stopped when the words "very good" were pronounced over Adam, the father of the human family. In those words we had a share; for that incomprehensible Being, to whom a thousand years are as one day, to whom the future is as the present, to whom things that are not are as things that are, had before Him the aggregated hosts of the unborn race, with the same distinctness as if each and every individual had already appeared on the stage of life. We were all not only good, but very good. No, my dear sir, men were never created sinners, and as God did not create them sinners at first, *He* did not make them sinners afterward. Yet all, without one single exception, are sinners by nature, and by nature the children of wrath. Nothing can be gained by denying the fact. There it stands out in bold and terrible relief. Let us go to the infallible teachings of inspiration for an explanation of this most remarkable phenomenon. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men, on infants as well as adults, for that all have sinned. That is, all sinned in Adam; for not by their personal disobedience, but by the disobedience

of *one* man, all men, infants as well as adults, were made sinners. Not by their personal offenses, but by one offense, judgment came upon all men, infants included, to condemnation ; and as all men die in Adam, infants, as truly as others, die in him. Infants were really lost, for the blessed Saviour says of little ones, that He came to seek and save them as lost. If they were not lost, they could have no part in the Saviour's work of redemption, and heaven would furnish the anomalous spectacle of one-half of the church saved by Christ, and the other half without Christ. But if infants are saved by grace, then not only were they lost, they were justly lost, for if they had not been justly lost, they could not possibly be saved by grace. To suppose that the Son of God should lay down His life for innocent, pure, and holy infants, or for infants not morally corrupt and depraved in nature, would involve the wickedness of charging that all-wise Being with an exhibition of folly and trifling without a parallel in the annals of the universe. If one infant only is saved, it is saved by grace. If ten infants are saved, they are saved by grace. If a thousand, if a million, if all infants are saved—and we have no reason to doubt this—then all are

saved by *grace*. Thus, sir, you will see that our doctrine of infant salvation is consistent with itself, is consistent with sound reason, and is consistent with the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures. Contrast with this, if you please, the Arminian view of this subject. According to Arminianism, infants were lost and they were not lost. They were not in reality lost—for justice would forbid it—and yet they are saved by grace. But, on the other hand, infants were also lost, nominally by Adam's transgression, but really by the atonement of Christ. They were lost in consequence of Christ's atonement for two reasons: first, because there would have been no infants; and, secondly, even if there had been infants, it would have been an act of infinite tyranny to expose them to loss on Adam's account; for how, asks the Rev. Dr. Foster, could they be to blame for that over which they had no more control than the Angel Gabriel? Infants are thus, on the Arminian plan, saved by grace and they are not saved by grace. They are saved by grace because Christ died for them, but if He had not died, they would have been saved at any rate. Thus you see, sir, that Arminianism is inconsistent with itself, is inconsistent with sound reason, and is inconsistent with

the teachings of the word of God. It gives me no pleasure to say so, but if ever there was a self-contradiction, open, barefaced, and absurd, the Methodist Arminian doctrine of infant salvation is just such a contradiction.

Yours, very truly,

JOHN SMITH.

P. S.—I take the liberty to furnish an extract from a sermon which I delivered some time ago. It will explain itself.

The bodies of our little ones, snatched by the rude hand of the destroyer from our affectionate embrace, we may consign to their mother earth, in full assurance of faith that the disenthralled immortals, regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, have gone to seek their kindred in the skies. Death is a vanquished foe. In the awful struggle with the Prince of Life, the monster lost its sting; and it is written in the volume of the deep decrees of God, that the last enemy of the church that is to be destroyed is Death itself. We ought then neither to murmur nor repine. We ought not even to wish them back. They are transferred to the Paradise above, and it would be cruel to have them recross the deep waters of Jordan in order to share our toils, to be exposed to our dangers

and temptations, and to be made partakers of our sufferings and trials. The dark and silent grave yawning to receive its coveted possession is indeed repulsive to nature, but the infantile tomb is lit up with the hopes which the Mighty Conqueror Himself, the Resurrection and the Life, has inspired. In that bright world to which they have passed, no fears shall disturb their calm repose, no disappointments cross their path, no vexations mar their peace. The only changes which they will undergo will be to pass from glory to glory, and from one height of excellence and bliss to another still more exalted. Were such little ones permitted to break the mysterious silence of eternity, how often might they not be heard to whisper words of endearment and encouragement not unlike these: "Father! Mother! weep not for us. We have been called from your family, to join the higher and holier family of our Father in heaven. We would not, oh! no, we would not if we could, forsake these celestial abodes to return to your habitations of clay. Weep not for us, weep for yourselves and for perishing sinners around you. Oh! could your eyes behold what we behold, could your ears hear what we hear—such countenances radiant with love, such majes-

tic forms, such an atmosphere, such sights, such glory, such kind greetings, such hymns of praise, such majesty and love in the ever adorable Redeemer, so gracious a reception by the eternal Father ! But it is not for you to know these things now. Live by faith on the Son of God, crucify the flesh, overcome the world, fight the good fight of faith, fight on, and when the victory is won, we will be the first to welcome you to the joys of our Father's house above."

J. S.

LETTER XIX.

DEAR BROTHER:—

I NOW come to a subject the very mention of which, most unfortunately, is apt to stir the prejudice, and sometimes the indignation, of Arminians—the doctrine of election. There are, it is to be feared, large classes of professed Christians who, if they could have their own way, would quietly drop such words as elect, election, predestinate, as unbefitting the religion of a rational and enlightened age. In the minds of not a few, the name of Calvin

is associated with these doctrines, just as if John Calvin had been the originator of them ; while these doctrines themselves, deep and glorious as the wisdom and love of God, are held in ignorant contempt. John Calvin was undoubtedly a great man, a very great man ; but we believe he had just as much to do with putting the sun and moon in the sky as with the authorship of these sublime truths. If the Genevan theologian and philosopher had never opened his eyes on this planet, it is altogether likely that the sun would shine by day, and the moon give her light by night ; and it is just as likely that the inspired volume would declare that God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and hardens whom He will harden. One thing at least is certain. These obnoxious expressions would not be found in the New Testament, if the sacred writers had designed to inculcate the sentiments of modern Arminianism. No Arminian ever willingly uses these expressions. No Methodist minister, unless it is to do battle, ever preaches from texts where such terms occur. Where would the eighth and ninth chapters of Romans be, if the sentiments of John Wesley had been the sentiments of the Apostle Paul ? What Arminian, of ancient or

modern times, could possibly have written the thirteenth chapter of Revelation? Imagine, if you can, my brother, an honest, straightforward discourse by Archbishop Hughes, from the text, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" or one by the Rev. M. D. Conway, from the text, "For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." Now just so impossible it is to imagine an honest, straightforward discourse by a Methodist Episcopal preacher from the text, "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him;" or from the text, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me."

The doctrine of personal election to holiness and eternal life is taught in the Scriptures, or it is not taught there. If the Bible does not teach this doctrine, we shall find nothing said about it, or we shall find it brought forward only to be condemned. The Romish dogmas of transubstantiation and purgatory are not anywhere mentioned in the New Testament, therefore we conclude that there is no such a

place as purgatory, and no such a thing as transubstantiation. In like manner, if the words elect, election, elected, chosen, predestinated, are not found applied to individuals in the Scriptures, then Arminians are right, and the doctrine of election is false. Now what are the facts? Are these terms, like transubstantiation and purgatory, nowhere mentioned in the Sacred Oracles? You know that they occur again and again.

But this doctrine might be brought forward only to have the seal of condemnation affixed to it. In that case, these expressions would indeed be employed, but they would be named only with abhorrence. It is well known that there is a long list of writers, Pelagian and Arminian, by whom the doctrine of personal election to holiness and eternal life has been assailed in language the most indignant and bitter. In that Methodist book, "Objections to Calvinism," the charges are rung on *pre-ordain, predestinate, elect, election*; but all the English, good and bad, at the author's command, seems inadequate to convey a full idea of the loathing and hatred of his soul for these terms. Let me give you a few specimens.

"It," the doctrine of election, "renders the

conclusion unavoidable that God is the responsible author of sin—author in the sense of originator and cause.”* “All, therefore, who hold to the unconditional election of a part of mankind to eternal life, must, to be consistent with themselves, take into their creed the horrible doctrine of reprobation. They must believe that, in the ages of eternity, God determined to create men and angels for the express purpose to damn them eternally! that He determined to introduce sin, and harden them in it that they might be fit subjects of His wrath! that for doing as they are impelled to do, by the irresistible decree of Jehovah, they must lie down forever under the scalding vials of His vengeance in the pit of hell! To state this doctrine in its true character, is enough to chill one’s blood, and we are drawn by all that is rational in us to turn away from such a God with horror, as from the presence of an Almighty Tyrant.”† Thus speaks the Rev. Dr. R. S. Foster, one of the living oracles of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Now, I would ask, does the Bible ever use

* Objections to Calvinism, p. 103.

† Ibid. p. 85.

language such as this? Is this in the style of Paul or Peter? Does the Apostle say, "God did not predestinate His people to the adoption of children; that He did *not* choose His people in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy; that He has *not* mercy on whom He will have mercy, but is bound to show mercy to all alike; that He hardeneth *not* whom He will harden, since this would make Him an infinite Tyrant?" Does the Saviour say, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast *not* hid these things from the wise and prudent; this could *never* seem good in Thy sight, since it would be the height of injustice to hide these things from any human being?" This would no doubt be genuine Arminianism; but does the Bible ever employ such language? I ask again, is this in the style of the Holy Scriptures? These questions carry with them their own answer. The fact is, the Bible not only nowhere speaks a word against the doctrine of election, but its whole teaching is in the most decided terms in its favor.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XX.

DEAR BROTHER :—

THE Apostle Paul opens one of his noble Epistles, by blessing God, the Father, for choosing believers in Christ before the foundation of the world, and for predestinating them to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of His will. The text stands in the first chapter of Ephesians, the fourth and fifth verses. It is not a cold logical formula, it is the language of rapturous praise—the lively expression of a soul burdened with a sense of the unspeakable majesty and mercy of God. What follows is reason of the highest order, reason penetrated and glowing with the fire of holy passion. But this noble text, remarkable for its stirring eloquence, is one which there is ground to believe is seldom or never handled in Arminian pulpits for simple edification. Of the thousands of Methodist churches in America, where is one that ever joins in praising God because He chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world? Where is one that is ever taught to do this? Where is one that could be

persuaded to do this? Do not rather such expressions awaken emotions just the opposite of those that were kindled in the breast of the inspired Apostle? To a candid Arminian, the words predestinated, chosen, elect, as they are met with in the Scriptures, must, it seems to me, be a perfect puzzle. He himself never, except in a diluted sense, employs such terms in praise, never employs them in prayer, never employs them to edify his own soul, or the souls of his brethren. He has in truth no use for them, and there is consequently no proper place for them in his system of theology. He sees and feels this. These terms are to him what the words hell, hell-fire, everlasting punishment are to the Universalist. He would most willingly dispense with them. And yet there they stand in the Bible. They mean something, or they would not be found there; but nothing that wit or ingenuity can do, is omitted to explain away their meaning, which is in itself so very plain and striking.

In the political world, the word election is in common use, and no grown-up person ever falls into a mistake as to its proper signification. And but for the inveterate force of prejudice, no grown-up person would ever fall into a mis-

take as to its meaning in the Bible. Election among men implies :

First. That there are certain persons chosen. If nobody is chosen, we say there is no election.

Secondly. That there is some definite end or object for which they are chosen ; thus such and such men are elected to the State Legislature, others to be members of Congress, and so on.

Thirdly. That there are qualified electors who make the choice, who choose, who elect.

Fourthly. That there are certain reasons which influence the majority of the electors in choosing the persons that are elected.

Fifthly. That there is a certain time when the choice is made ; thus on such a day of such a month an election takes place.

Now what is so plain and easy to understand in political matters, is just as plain and simple in matters of religion. 1st. There are certain persons chosen. Paul, speaking of himself and the Ephesian Christians, says : He hath chosen *us* in Christ. But all true believers were chosen in the same way, and are in the Scriptures styled the elect, the election. "If it were possible they would deceive the very elect." "Shall not God avenge His own elect?"

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies.” “The election hath obtained it, the rest were blinded.” At the end of the world a certain number, no doubt a very large number of the human race, will be received into heaven, to be forever glorified with the Saviour. “But whom He glorified He also justified, and whom He justified them He also called, and whom He called them He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

2d. There was a definite end to which they were chosen; namely, to be holy and blameless in love. To God mankind appeared in prospect, what they now are in fact, a race of rebels, all, to an individual, disposed to despise His commands and to resist His authority, and all most justly exposed to endless wrath. From this mass of moral corruption and guilt, hosts, innumerable as the sands on the shores of the sea, were predestinated to the adoption of children, and chosen to be holy and without blame before Him in love.

3d. There was a certain period when the election took place. It was not in time, but before time began; not *after*, but *before* the

foundation of the world. It was in that awful period of the past to which the Saviour refers in that remarkable prayer, "Glorify Thou me, O Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was;" infinite ages before the first ray of created light had penetrated the darkness of chaos, or the first anthem of praise had broken the silence of eternity.

4th. There was one Elector, and but one, God Himself. Not a single passage in the Bible teaches that Christians elected themselves. How could they choose themselves before the foundation of the world? That is not all. God only has the right to choose, and He claims this right. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God only has the power to choose. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor?" To choose sinners in Christ implies also the power to raise them from the dead, both in a spiritual and natural sense, and this power resides exclusively in the arm of Omnipotence. Christians are styled God's elect, and they would not be so denominated if any but God had elected them.

5th. There were certain reasons which influenced the Divine Mind in this election. These reasons are worthy of the wisdom and greatness of Jehovah, but to us it is not given to know them. It does not comport with the majesty of the Eternal Father to descend to an explanation of His conduct. His ways are not, and cannot be our ways, and His thoughts are not, and cannot be our thoughts. It is enough for us to know that such was His sovereign will and pleasure. The argument of all others the most powerful to sway the judgment and to command the obedience of all the principalities and powers of heaven is this—such is the will of God. Here all argument stops. Beyond this Gabriel does not seek to go. Now what satisfies the capacious mind of an archangel, ought surely to convince the narrow understanding of a creature so recent and so feeble as man. We can ascend even beyond this. A greater by far than an archangel, Jesus Christ Himself, finds rest in this last and highest of all reasons: “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight,” so is Thy righteous will and pleasure.

Permit me, in conclusion, to present the Apostle’s argument in this simple form.

There are persons chosen. Who are they? All Christians, the elect.

There was a certain definite end to which they were chosen. What was it? To become holy and blameless in love.

There was a certain period in which the election took place. When was it? Before the foundation of the world.

There was one qualified Elector, and but one. Who was it? God the Father.

There were certain reasons, wise and just, that influenced the infinite mind of the Father, in this election. What were they? These reasons He does not see fit to give, nor does He condescend to explain the motives from which He is pleased to act. He predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, *according to the good pleasure of His will*. Here our inquiries and our investigations must stop.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXI.

DEAR BROTHER :—

THE sovereignty of God has, in all ages, roused the opposition of the human heart. Wit, argument, eloquence, bombast, satire, burlesque, have all been employed in turn, and employed till their force was spent against this clearly revealed truth. Nor is this opposition mere show. It springs from no simulated enmity ; but from enmity that comes from the bottom of the soul. Absolute sovereignty is, with these men, but another name for absolute tyranny ; and that which calls forth the Alleluias of heaven, only extorts *their* denunciations and curses. They place confidence in their Maker, only so far as it is clear to their understandings that He is doing right, or, at least, that He is not doing wrong. They cannot, so to speak, trust Him out of sight. They must see to it that He does not overstep the just bounds of His authority, and trample on the rights of sinners. It will not do to tell them that God, in bestowing mercy on whom He will have mercy, and in hardening whom He will harden, is actuated by reasons in-

finitely wise and infinitely good. They must see these reasons for themselves. It is not sufficient for Him to say, "Be still, and know that I am God; know that though I give no reasons for my conduct, what I do is always done in perfect righteousness and perfect justice." They will not be still, but plainly inform Him that they do not concede to Him the prerogative to show mercy to one rebel and not to another. Why should He have mercy on some and not on others? Why should He withhold mercy from any sinner? Would not this involve Him in criminal partiality and gross injustice? Are not all men His creatures? Did they have a hand in making themselves what they are, depraved and corrupt? Have not all sinners a claim, a just and equal claim, to the Divine favor? Is not God bound to respect this claim? Whence then has He the right to leave a sinner to himself or to suffer him to follow the devices of his depraved imagination? Might not such a sinner turn on his Maker, and, clearing himself of all blame, lay all his sins and crimes to his Maker's charge? Nay, might not such a sinner, deeply sensible of the injury inflicted on him, his rights disregarded, his just claims set at naught, ascend the throne of judgment himself, and summon

the Almighty to the tribunal of justice? "Thou, O Lord, didst have mercy on other sinners but not on me. To others Thou gavest grace to repent and believe, to me Thou gavest no grace. Why didst Thou thus? True, I was a sinner; I did trample on Thy authority; I did hate Thy holy character; my carnal mind was at enmity with Thee; I did reject the offers of salvation; I did hold the Saviour in utter contempt; but could I be to blame for this? Was not my nature depraved? Was it in my power to love Thee? Why didst Thou not bestow on me a sufficient measure of grace? Why didst Thou not, by Thy almighty power, overcome the rebellion and enmity of my heart? If Thou hast mercy on whom Thou wilt have mercy, and hardenest whom Thou wilt harden, why then dost Thou find fault, for who hath resisted Thy will? I do therefore, Lord, protest against such criminal partiality, and I solemnly appeal from Thee to the conscience of the universe!" Do you say, my brother, that I have been drawing a mere picture of the fancy; that no person in his sober senses would venture to adopt such a style of reasoning, or to address the Divine Majesty in terms so fraught with insolence? I reply, this is no sketch of the fancy. Would that it were so.

It is, I grieve to say it, but too faithful a description of fact. Are you disposed to call this in question? Is proof required? Do you demand of me to point out the men who take it on themselves to claim for rebels a share, and for all rebels an equal share of grace; and who publicly threaten, if grace were denied to a single sinner, to stigmatize Jehovah in the face of His creation, as an Infinite and Almighty Tyrant? Do you ask why I bring forward objections urged only by persons who know neither the meaning of sin on the one hand, nor of grace on the other hand; by persons who make light of God's immaculate purity, and turn the dreadful sanctions of His holy law into jest; objections urged by Socinians, by Universalists, by Rationalists? I answer that *they are also the objections, the very objections, used by Methodist Arminians*. Do you deny this? Do you pronounce such an accusation false? Do you call on me to name any Methodist preachers or writers, who have the assurance to bring forward objections so supremely wicked and absurd, or who employ language so bold and irreverent, that it absolutely borders on blasphemy? Stand forth, Doctor Foster, author of "Objections to

Calvinism," and thou, Bishop Simpson, his indorser; ye are the men!

Hear, now, what the Rev. Dr. Foster has to say: "I object to it (the doctrine of Election) as involving the Divine Being in the grossest injustice, and criminal partiality.* It represents God as worse than the Devil can be—as more false, more cruel, and unjust. More false, because the Devil, liar as he is, hath never said, 'He willeth all men to be saved;' more unjust, because the Devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemns millions of souls to everlasting fire, for continuing in sin, which, for the grace that He will not give them they cannot avoid. Human nature is depraved, and unless changed by the grace of God, it must sin on, must sin ever. But if he must sin, and cannot avoid it, the man cannot be to blame for it, can he? Let it not be said he brought the disability on himself. If this were so, it would relieve the case. But this is not the fact. His disability came with him into the world; it was communicated as a part of his existence; it was

* Dr. Foster quotes and indorses these sentiments of Mr. Wesley.

his very essential nature. His first parent may be to blame, but surely he cannot be responsible. Let him sin, no being in the universe can censure him, he is not to blame. Not only is he not to blame for his sins, (if God withhold grace,) but he cannot be required to do right—he is under no obligation to do right. Nay, I go a step further, and say that the actual sins of reprobates forms no juster ground of their damnation than their natural corruption, for they were brought into existence with a corrupt nature, for which it was never possible for them to free themselves; which they had no consent in bringing on themselves, and with it their actual sins were absolutely unavoidable, and so could no more constitute a just ground of condemnation, than would their inherited depravity. It renders the conclusion unavoidable, that the sinner is absolutely damned, not only without the possibility of salvation, but without any fault of his whatever. They are called to return to God, to repent, to believe in Christ, to a holy life—no one of which calls could they possibly obey; and yet, for not obeying, every time they refuse, their damnation is increased. Is not this awful, frightful! Dreadful! dreadful! dreadful! Thou Great Spirit of the heavens, art thou such a monster as this?"

These quotations, my brother, will, I trust, satisfy, perhaps they will more than satisfy your demands. They are all taken, and many more, couched in similar language, breathing a similar spirit, and pervaded by a logic equally conclusive, might be taken out of Foster's "Objections to Calvinism." "This work," says Bishop Simpson, of your church, "has been well executed. The objections are distinctly and explicitly stated, and the intelligent reader will, we think, be fully convinced they are well sustained. We commend the volume as one of great merit."*

In my last letter, I summed up the arguments of the Apostle Paul in favor of the doctrine of Election; I will now, by way of contrast, sum up the Rev. Dr. Foster's arguments against this doctrine, and Dr. Foster's arguments are also the arguments of Bishop Simpson:—

All men are naturally depraved. No man is to blame for natural depravity. No man, unless a measure of grace is bestowed, is responsible for actual sin, any more than for hereditary depravity. God is obligated to bestow grace on all men. He is not at liberty to have mercy

* Bishop Simpson's Introduction to Objections to Calvinism.

on one sinner, and to pass by another. Justice requires an equal distribution of grace. If in any instance God should refuse to bestow grace, He would be criminally partial and grossly unjust. If God should undertake to call such a sinner to account, the sinner might lay the whole guilt of all his sins and crimes to the charge of his Maker, and before the universe proclaim his Maker a monster and tyrant !

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXII.

DEAR BROTHER :—

THE whole controversy on the doctrine of election hinges on this—claim or no claim. If mankind, as sinners, can lay claim to the mercy of God, it is a waste of time to argue the question ; Arminians in that case are right, and the doctrine of election is false. If such a title is inherent in sinners, we Calvinists are in a grievous error, and deserve all the abuse we are accustomed to receive. But have sinners such a claim ? Is such a title inherent in rebels and traitors ? Must God, in order to be just, show

mercy to His enemies? Who would dare to answer these questions in the affirmative? And yet it is a remarkable fact that this *is always taken for granted* by Arminians, whenever they make their attacks on the doctrine of election.

Our system of theology knows nothing of claim on God—indeed we should be ashamed of it if it did. An error so serious can spring only from loose views of the nature of sin. I do not, in saying so, desire to intimate that *we* take in a complete and perfect view of this most terrific evil. We do not. The human faculties are too weak, the area of human vision is too contracted, the theater on which sin displays its tragic career is too small, the years of time are too few, to furnish an opportunity to master even in thought this frightful theme. It would require an imagination vigorous enough to soar with unfaltering pinions to the inaccessible heights of the eternal throne, an understanding powerful enough to investigate and comprehend the full sense of infinite goodness, infinite holiness, infinite justice, and an eye keen enough to pierce the abysses of guilt and the abysses of woe, into which a rebel creature plunges in its audacious attempts to set at defiance the authority the blessed Creator. But

where is a created being possessed of powers so capacious to be found? Not on earth. Not in heaven, for even heaven itself could not, from the most gifted of her gifted sons, furnish abilities adequate to such a task.

But while, in the absolute sense, the dreadful import of sin lies not within the reach of a creature's mind, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, sinners themselves are enabled to understand that sin is the direst of evils, that it is in truth the only real evil. The conscience, enlightened and awakened, threatens in a voice of thunder, and the sinner trembles before a holy God. Propose to such a man, prostrate before the footstool of mercy, to address his Maker in the terms which Arminians employ in assailing the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty, and his whole soul would revolt at such daring impiety. He would sooner consent to have a millstone tied to his neck and to be cast into the depths of the sea. Why, then, we may demand, do your writers and preachers make use of language in *argument* which no sane man would ever venture to employ in *prayer*? And what must be the worth of objections which, though they may impose on the unthinking multitude, the instant they are converted into the language of prayer become blasphemy?

I have, in some of my letters, quoted largely from Foster's "Objections to Calvinism," to show that the fundamental idea of Arminianism, as far as it departs from the teachings of the Bible, is that sinners as sinners, and because they are sinners, have a just and legal claim on the mercy and grace of God. I will now quote from a greater than Mr. Foster, the Rev. John Wesley, to prove the same thing. This is Mr. Wesley's language: "Are you sure that God might justly pass by all men? I deny it. That God might justly, for my unfaithfulness to His grace, have given me up long ago, I grant; but this concession supposes me to have had grace."* In other words, God had not the right to cast off John Wesley, simply as a fallen sinner. John Wesley, to be held responsible for wrongdoing, must have grace. John Wesley, *without* grace conferred, might confidently stand forth and challenge the right of the Almighty to bring him to punishment. John Wesley, *with* grace conferred, yields the point, and is ready to acknowledge that for unfaithfulness to grace God has a hold on him, and might even long ago have given him over. This he is willing

* Predestination Calmly Considered, pp. 25, 26.

to concede ; but he desires it to be expressly understood that this concession is made only on condition that grace be previously bestowed.

It may not be unprofitable to ask, how would such language sound in the mouth of the Apostle Paul ? Imagine such an anomaly, if you can, and for once let Paul be an Arminian. "By grace are ye saved, through faith and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God. God could not, however, in *justice*, have passed by all men. Where is it written that He might do this ? I cannot find it in the word of God. Therefore I reject it as a bold, precarious assertion, utterly unsupported by Holy Scripture. Does any one say to you, my brethren—(Paul still speaking)—you know in your own conscience that God might justly have passed you by and left you to perish in your guilt ? I deny it. That God might justly, for your unfaithfulness to His grace, have given you up long ago, I grant ; but this concession supposes you to have had grace."*

Now of all difficult tasks, you would find none more difficult than to believe that the great

* Read, I beg you, the above language in Wesley's *Predestination Calmly Considered*, pp. 25, 26.

Apostle of the Gentiles could have given utterance to sentiments like these; the very sentiments of John Wesley, the founder of Arminian Methodism.

To be plain with you, my brother, you believe in grace and you do not believe in grace. You call that grace in one breath, what, in the next breath, you claim that God was in justice bound to do. But how justice was bound to do the work of grace, we Calvinists cannot understand. Our belief, so often and so freely expressed, is that a race of rebels deserve no mercy. Arminians and Pelagians join hand in hand to oppose this doctrine. All the hard names in the dictionary, and some words not found there, are most liberally applied to us, because we confidently assert that sinners have *not* a claim on the Divine mercy. We contend that grace and obligation are *not* synonymous terms. In the Scriptures grace is pure, and like virgin gold without alloy. The grace of Arminianism, on the other hand, is a sort of compound of real grace and real debt; and the strange medley is set forth and described under the captivating title of *free* grace. For instance, you all hold the sentiment that God of His mercy sent His Son into the world to die for sinners—

this is grace. But you do not stick to this. You also maintain that if He had not sent His Son into the world to save sinners, He would have been unjust—this is debt. That is, God is infinitely good to our fallen race in conferring grace, but He would be infinitely unjust to our fallen race did He not confer grace. And this is what you call, by way of eminence, *free* grace.

The substance of Arminian theology, concentrated and condensed, may be comprehended in this brief saying, namely, sinners, one and all, have a just claim to a certain measure of grace. Give up this claim, and where would your brethren commence their assaults on the doctrine of election and on the Sovereignty of God? Give up this claim, and what would become of Dr. Foster's "Objections to Calvinism?" Give up this claim, and what, my dear brother Peter, would become of *you* at your next Annual Conference? Give up this claim, and Arminianism gives up the ghost.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXIII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

NEVER was the doctrine of election, coupled with a general offer of salvation, stated more clearly than in this charming sentence: "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." The elegant simplicity of this passage is surpassed only by the depth and comprehensiveness of its meaning. The Divine election and human freedom are here brought out, not in opposition to each other, not by way of contrast, but side by side, in consummate harmony. The offer of salvation takes in the widest scope. It is not to the Jew only, nor only to the Gentile; it is not merely to the learned and intelligent, nor merely to the unlettered and the ignorant; it is not simply to the great and powerful, nor simply to the poor and lowly; it is to the Jew *and* the Gentile, to the learned *and* the unlearned, to the rich *and* the poor, to the powerful *and* the weak, that the gracious offer is made in like terms of condescension and encouragement. Nor was the promise restricted to sinners

of His own time; it comes down, blessed be His name, in all its fullness and freshness to the sinners of this generation. He turns not away from any broken-hearted penitent. He never says, "You are too insignificant, you are too degraded, your sins are too numerous, your guilt is too great." Were death and hell to-day to give up the dead that are in them, the annals of perdition could not furnish a solitary instance of a sinner cast out who had sincerely applied to Him for salvation.

But while this is a glorious truth, it is equally true that, unless accompanied by a special influence from above, this most remarkable offer is never accepted, is never deemed worth accepting. The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; it is only to those who are the called, according to the Divine purpose, that it becomes the power of God unto salvation. Only those receive the Saviour, only those really believe in His name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. All others invariably reject Him.

What proportion of the human race, it may be asked, will eventually be saved from sin and everlasting death? Those who come to the

Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and life. Who are they that come to Him for pardon and life? Those whom the Father gave to the Son. Will any of these fail to come? Not one. "*All that the Father giveth to me,*" says the Saviour, "*shall come to me.*" Will any others come? None. "No man," says the same Divine Personage, "can come unto me except it were given to him of my Father." Why cannot such a sinner come? Does God hinder him from coming? God forbid. Why then can he not come? Because he will not. Suppose he should will to come, would he be saved? Certainly. Would not this involve a contradiction? Not in the least. The promise runs thus: "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." But can the sinner come to Christ, can he ever be made willing to come, unless the Father draw him? No. "No man can come unto me except my Father draw him." But if none can come to the Saviour but those who are drawn by the Father, is any sinner to blame for not coming? Undoubtedly. Why should he not be to blame, when the whole difficulty lies, not in God, but in himself, lies in the fearful wickedness of his rebellious soul? The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of

God, neither can it be. You might as well ask, is the carnal mind to blame because it cannot be subject to the law of God? They that are in the flesh, that is, they that are not born of the Spirit, cannot please God. You might as well ask, are they to blame for being in the flesh? Are they to blame if they cannot please God? There is a class of persons described as having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin. You might as well ask are they to blame if they cannot cease from sin? The Devil hates his Maker with a perfect hatred. You might as well ask is the Devil to blame for not loving God, since his hatred is so intense that he cannot love Him? You see the force of all these objections. If sinners were anxious to make their way to the Saviour, and it was God that kept them back, and hindered them from coming to Him, it would, indeed, be a very different matter. But it is all the other way. They *will not* be saved. Such is their stubbornness, such is the deep-seated enmity of their hearts to God, they will not come to Christ for salvation. Does justice require that sinners be forced to fly for refuge to the Redeemer, in opposition to their own deliberate and determined choice?

But, you may ask, is it not the tendency of

such a doctrine to fill the soul with discouragement? Why should it have such a tendency? Does not the Lord Jesus say that He will receive all that come to Him? Is not this plain enough? Is there anything discouraging in this? Is not His word to be relied on as the word of truth? But how can a person know that he is one of the elect? Might he not, after coming to the Saviour, find that, after all, he belonged to the non-elect? That would not be possible. Such an objection refutes itself. The very fact that he comes to Christ, is itself a proof of his election; for none but those whom the Father gave to the Son ever take such a step.

Let us suppose a certain number of persons, say a thousand, say a million. To each of these million sinners there is the same promise, that if *he* will come to the Lord Jesus Christ *he* shall be saved. Is not this sufficient? Can a reasonable creature ask for more? What would a man really in earnest do? What would an honest man do? An honest man, a man really in earnest to secure his eternal well-being, would have no hesitation to act on such a promise at once. It is only cavilers that urge such objections, and if any one chooses to

play the fool by refusing to apply for pardon before he has ascertained whether he is one of God's elect, let him do so. I say again, an honest man finds no difficulty here.

If a thousand estates, each worth a million of dollars, were set up as free gifts to paupers, on precisely the same conditions as the Saviour offers eternal life, there would in such a case be no caviling. An earnest, sober-minded man would reason thus : There may be, perhaps, a hundred times more beggars than estates ; but no matter, I will do my best, I will be only the more in earnest, I will labor only the harder to secure the prize to myself. A fault-finder, a regular Arminian, on the other hand, might say : It would be folly in me to apply for an estate before I have found out to a certainty that I am to have one. If I am to have one of these estates, I shall have one, do what I may ; if I am not to have one, I shall fail, do what I can ; so I will give myself no trouble about the matter. Suppose such a wiseacre should further argue : It is true, this splendid prize is offered to any pauper on condition that he will go and apply for it, but I will not go to make application for it, because I do not want it. I will have nothing to do with it. But let it be distinctly understood,

however, that if the donor does not make me willing to go, if he does not force me to accept, the whole blame of my poverty and wretchedness must rest with him, not with me. What a beautiful illustration of Arminian reasoning! But seriously, would any human being, unless devoid of common sense, ever act on such principles in the affairs of this life?

God has made Abraham Lincoln President of the United States. This event was just as certain two years ago, a thousand years ago, eternal ages ago, as it is now. Two years ago there were four candidates for the Presidency. Did either of those distinguished men refuse to run because, forsooth, he could not certainly know beforehand that he would be elected? Did you at that time hear any politician apply the principles of Arminianism to politics, and argue in some such way as this: "Gentlemen, if God has elected Mr. Lincoln, he will be our next President; if He has elected Mr. Douglas, he will be President; or if He has chosen Mr. Breckenridge or Mr. Bell, why then one of these will be our Chief Magistrate. So you see, gentlemen, it is of no use to do anything. There is no need of any effort. You trouble yourselves for nothing. You cannot change the

purpose of God. You ought therefore first to find out which of these candidates God has ordained to fill the Presidential chair."

There have been in our country, no doubt, some very wild, and a few very foolish politicians, but I am bold to say that no party has had advocates wild enough or foolish enough to employ such reasoning on any subject connected with politics, or on any other subject that involves the plain common sense of mankind. Religion forms an exception to this rule. It is only in religion that men can afford to be inconsistent enough to be Arminians.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXIV.

DEAR BROTHER :—

IF William B. Astor were to give public notice that, on such a day, he would put up in the City of New York a ton of gold as a prize, on this condition, that of ten thousand applicants, he should become the fortunate possessor who begged the longest and the hardest, would not that day be set down as one of the

most memorable in the annals of that great metropolis? Neither the Japanese Embassy, nor the Great Eastern, nor the Prince of Wales, no, nor even Jefferson Davis, could draw such masses of people together. It would no doubt be a scene for a painter. Every avenue and street, every lane and alley, every nook and corner alive with the worshipers of Mammon; all pressing with eager steps to catch a glimpse of the wished-for treasure. Men and women, who turn up their noses at the wealth and honor God offers to bestow, and who would not give a straw for all the possessions heaven itself contains, would now be found wide awake, closely calculating the chances of success, and resolved to try the utmost strength and capabilities of their lungs. But who could describe or even imagine the effect of ten thousand voices strained to accents long and loud, deep and shrill, begging, whining, screeching, vociferating for gold? A tithe of such earnestness and such effort in the right direction, would insure not only to one, but to all of them, a title to an inheritance enduring as the days of heaven. While I am writing this, the fancy by a natural association of ideas brings up the familiar form of the Rev. Dr. R.

S. Foster, laboring with most praiseworthy energy and zeal to make a practical application of his celebrated Arminian arguments to the case now before him. "My good friends!" I think I hear the worthy doctor cry, "my good friends! only one of you can get the prize. Nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine are making yourselves hoarse to no purpose. Since only one man can obtain the treasure, why do you not all go home and get about your business? Whoever is to have this mass of gold will get it without fail, and if the rest of you were to clamor for it a thousand years it would do no good. If it is decreed that you are to be the favored one, it is all one whether you exert yourself or not. You are safe enough. You cannot possibly be set aside. The gold is yours because the Divine decree secures it to you. I say again, if it is so that God has decreed that you shall have this treasure, it will be yours, whether you strive to obtain it or not. If, on the other hand, it is foreordained that you are not to have it, you may bawl away till your windpipe bursts and you will have your labor for your pains. What folly, then, to give yourselves any trouble about the matter! Can you be simple enough to believe that you can

change the purpose of God or frustrate His designs?" "Doctor Foster," I think I hear these gentlemen say in reply, "we like your arguments extremely well when religion is the topic; but gold not religion is just now the thing to be obtained, and we might be regarded as not quite in our right minds were we to act out your theory in the practical matter of fact before us. In the pulpit, this method of reasoning, we are glad to say, brother Foster, is capital. Employed against the doctrine of election it is perfectly irresistible. We cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom and skill with which you have so often demonstrated to us, that if a man is elected to eternal life he need not repent, he need not believe in Christ, he need not live a holy life; he may lie, may cheat and rob, may commit adultery, may commit murder; his salvation remains perfectly secure, and he cannot possibly be lost. We have also been delighted with the uncommon clearness and force of your logic, when you have undertaken to prove that if a person has not been elected to everlasting life, he may repent, he may trust in the Saviour, he may pray and weep and beg for the Divine favor; he may renounce all his sins, be ever so penitent, have ever so strong a faith, and live

ever so holy a life, it is all in vain. There is no salvation for him, and do what he will he must be damned. We do love to hear you argue in this way, where the destiny of man and the interests of the future world are the subject of discourse.

“But while in the pulpit this style of reasoning is extremely forcible and perfectly convincing, while it is most wonderfully calculated to overwhelm Calvinism, and to make Calvinists shrink away abashed and confounded, such arguments, the moment they are brought to bear on the ordinary business affairs of life, we must honestly tell you lose all their weight and point; and to be plain, doctor, are absolutely good for nothing. So please excuse us, Dr. Foster, if we say again that we should be little better than fools were we in this matter to carry into practice your otherwise excellent theory.”

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXV.

DEAR BROTHER :—

THERE are two very important facts to which I now propose to call attention; afterward I will inquire into the reasons of the facts. The first fact, well known and disputed by nobody, is that all men do *not* come to Christ for salvation. Atheists, Deists, and Pantheists, as such, do not come. Mormons, Spiritualists, Universalists, Socinians, as such, do not come. Murderers, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, gamblers, blasphemers, the covetous, the self-righteous, as such, in one word, the impenitent of every class and description, as such, do not come. To the question, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" the Lord replied, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." The road to everlasting death was in the Saviour's time very wide, and the travelers on it exceedingly numerous. That fatal highway has not become less wide, while the gate that opens to eternal life is just as straight, and the way just as narrow as ever. So much for the first fact.

The second fact, acknowledged alike by Arminians and Calvinists, is that a certain portion of mankind *do* come to the Lord Jesus to be saved. Many a weary sinner, oppressed with a sense of guilt, applied to Him in person during His sojourn on earth. Nor was such an application ever in vain. That voice, which in tones of awful rebuke, sent consternation to a generation of vipers and hypocrites, fell in accents of heavenly tenderness on the ears of the broken in heart, and diffused a peace through the spirit that passed all understanding. Since the Redeemer's exaltation to the right hand of Power, vast multitudes have renounced the service of sin, have labored and suffered for His name's sake, and are now reigning with Him in glory. There are thousands and tens of thousands at present on the earth who have fled from the approaching storm to this dear Refuge, who are united by faith to the Lord Jesus, in whom Jesus lives, to whom Jesus is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and for whom the very name of Jesus has an inexpressible charm—a

Dear Name, the Rock on which they build,

Their Shield and Hiding-place;

Their never-failing Treasury, filled

With boundless stores of grace.

So much for the second fact.

Here, then, are two stupendous facts : a portion of mankind come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and are saved ; all the rest of mankind do not come, and are lost. How are we to account for these facts ?

And, first, why do sinners reject the proffered aid of the only Being who can deliver them from everlasting destruction ? Why will they not come to the great Redeemer, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of the Father's Person, for pardon and for eternal life ? The Bible discloses the painful cause. A fixed, settled, deadly enmity to God, is the barrier and the only barrier in the way. Let this be removed, and the attractions of the cross would become absolutely irresistible. But to the removal of this fatal barrier, the impenitent sinner, in whose estimation sin is happiness and holiness is misery, will by no means consent. Not heaven with its infinite joys, not hell with its infinite woes, can furnish motives strong enough to induce him to consent. Life itself is less dear to him than sin. You and we agree in maintaining that sinners refuse to come to the Saviour because they will not come, and that the reasons of their rejection of the offers of mercy all have their origin in the

dreadful wickedness of their hearts. They love darkness rather than light; that is, they love sin rather than holiness, rebellion rather than obedience, Satan rather than God. The whole difficulty begins and ends with themselves. They *will not* come that they may have life. So far there is no difference between us.

But though we agree on this point, we are, unfortunately, not agreed on this other question; while sinners in crowds reject the Saviour and are lost, why do other sinners come to Him to be saved? With the reasons you assign we are not satisfied. It is not that they are false reasons; as far as they go they are sound and good enough, but we charge that they do not go far enough. Men come to Christ, you say, because they experience the vanity of the world, because they taste the bitterness of sin, because they are attracted by the charms of the Saviour. All this is true. But here you stop. Yet the great Teacher does not stop here. These reasons He does indeed accept, but blends them harmoniously in this one grand ultimate reason, because the Father gave them to the Son. I know that you insist that it is by grace, and not of ourselves that we are saved, and I rejoice that you do insist on this; but still, in your view of

the matter, it ultimately depends not on God, but on the sinner, whether he is saved. The ultimate reasons of the sinner's coming to Christ you fix where you fix the ultimate reasons of the sinner's refusing to come to Christ, in the sinner himself. Now it is remarkable that Arminians, among the reasons they assign on this subject, never specify the grand reason given by the Saviour himself. In no Arminian book can it be found, from no Arminian pulpit is it proclaimed, that the Father gave the Son power over all flesh, that he, the Son, should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him, and that all that the Father gave to the Son shall come to Him. And yet the salvation of each and every Christian is traced to this as its ultimate source. To sum up the matter, the final reason of a sinner's salvation we fix in God. The final reason of a sinner's salvation you fix in the sinner himself. And this is a standing subject of difference between you and us.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXVI.

DEAR BROTHER :—

YOU Arminians object to us that if only those are saved whom the Father has given to the Son, it is folly to offer salvation to sinners not elected to eternal life. This objection has its origin in the singular fallacy that the future condition of every person is always to be known by us. A Methodist preacher takes it for granted, if some were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and others not chosen, that there must be some secret marks by which both parties can be recognized, and because nobody has ever discovered such secret marks, therefore he draws the conclusion there are no elect. In both the Arminian and Calvinistic schemes, the same persons and precisely the same number of persons are saved. The number of sinners regenerated, sanctified, and glorified is just as large in our catalogue as in yours ; there is not a name in the one which is not found in the other. If, then, Calvinists ought to offer salvation only to those that shall be saved, that is to the elect, why ought not Arminians to do so

too? But you will say that the number of the elect was not fixed by a decree from eternity. Suppose it was not; suppose that the church was *not* elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; suppose that believers were *not* chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; suppose that those whom the Father will glorify were *not* predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son; decree or no decree, election or no election, there is not a single sinner more saved according to your scheme than according to our scheme, nor is there a single sinner more lost in our system than in yours. You know and believe as well as we that a definite number of the human race will be saved, and that in the end of the world just so many sinners, neither more or less, will be glorified in heaven; why then do *your* preachers offer salvation to those who will never be saved? Do you say, that had they closed in with the offer of mercy they too might have been saved? So say we. Do you contend that it was their wicked unbelief and not a Divine decree that hindered them from coming to Christ? That is also our doctrine. The Divine decree has, blessed be God, drawn many a poor forlorn sinner to the Saviour; but it has never,

never drawn away any sinner from the Saviour. The Rev. Dr. Foster, on the ninety-fifth page of his book, which Bishop Simpson regards as a work of great merit, asks these questions: "If Christ only died for a part of mankind, and if only a definite number may come to Him and be saved, I ask Dr. Rice, in the name of all reason and consistency, with what propriety can he invite persons not of the elect to come to Christ—to turn that they may have life, and to seek the favor of God? Why does he make such invitations? Is it not mockery, then, to ask them? Are not all such invitations sheer trifling with interests the most awful and tremendous?" Dr. Foster is evidently an earnest man, and for aught I know an honest man; but it is difficult to comprehend how a judgment, naturally good, can be swayed by *such* reasons. His intense hatred of the doctrine of election only can account for this; for I would not insult his understanding by supposing it to be possible that he could be persuaded to argue seriously in this way on any topic outside of Arminian theology.

Of the four hundred souls on board of the *Lady Elgin*, now at the bottom of Lake Michigan, only ninety-two were preserved from death.

Let us suppose Dr. Foster to have been a passenger, and that an angel of the Lord had, on that eventful night, revealed to him that a definite number, exactly ninety-two persons, would reach the shore alive, while all the rest would certainly perish. Soon after the fatal collision, the captain of the vessel rushes into the cabin, breaks open the bolted state-room doors, and in a voice of thunder cries out, "Rise! men, rise! the steamer is a wreck; here are life preservers, take them, fasten yourselves to them, be of good courage, exert all your energies, and do your best to reach the land." "Captain," replies Dr. Foster, if we might imagine it within the compass of possibility that Dr. Foster should utter such Arminian absurdities on such an occasion, "captain, only ninety-two out of the four hundred passengers will be saved. Give your life-preservers only to those ninety-two; tell only these to make use of them, encourage only these to be of good cheer, exhort only these to put forth all their efforts to escape destruction. Since a definite number, just ninety-two, are to be preserved from a watery grave, I ask, captain, in the name of all reason and consistency, with what propriety can you invite persons not of the elect ninety-two to make use

of life-preservers, and exhort them to be of good courage, and to exert themselves to the utmost to secure their deliverance? Is it not mockery to ask these three hundred and eight to do this? Why do you make such invitations? Are not all such invitations sheer trifling with interests the most awful and tremendous?"

"Nay, captain," continues the doctor, "I go further, and maintain that if you are one of the ninety-two, you need not give yourself any trouble about your situation, as there is no cause of alarm. You are safe enough; you could not be drowned even if you were to sink to the bottom of the lake. If, on the other hand, you are not of this chosen number, all your efforts will be fruitless, and escape impossible. You may, therefore, as well retire to your state-room, fold your arms and quietly await the result. For my part, captain, I intend to sit still, and will neither lift a finger nor move a foot. I am an Arminian, and my practice shall not belie my sentiments. My doctrine is, that if I am one of the elect ninety-two, I cannot be drowned; if I am not one of this elect number, I cannot escape."

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXVII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

IF I ask a Universalist whether he believes that the wicked will be punished in hell, certainly he believes in hell and punishment, but it is a hell without fire, and punishment without wrath. If I ask an Arminian whether he holds to the doctrine of election, "Certainly," is the reply; because it is impossible not to hold to some kind of election, since the Sacred Oracles are so explicit on this subject. The ground of election, according to the Scriptures, is to be sought in the sovereign will of God, who has mercy on whom He will have mercy. The ground of election, according to Arminianism, is to be sought not in the sovereign will of God, but in the self-determining will of man. It is not God that controls the choice of the sinner, it is the sinner that controls the choice of God. The Rev. John Wesley expresses his views on this subject thus: "God foreappointed obedient believers to salvation, not without, but according to His foreknowledge of all their works." That is, if Mr. Wesley is right, men were chosen

to salvation not as lost sinners, but as already obedient believers. They, on their part, first willed to believe in Christ and to obey Him; He, on His part, in consideration of such faith and obedience, foreappointed them to salvation.

Mr. Wesley does indeed refer the salvation of sinners to grace. Far be it from me to say that he does not; but we ought, he thinks, to be careful not to ascribe too much to grace. He is very severe on Calvinists for maintaining that election lies at the root of all genuine faith and obedience—the starting-point of each believer's salvation. He grants that Christians are elect, but it was their faith, their repentance, their love, their good works foreseen that influenced the Divine choice. It was this that secured their election. God foresaw that they would exercise a sounder judgment than others, and that they would be disposed to do what was right by making a proper improvement of His grace. Since impartial justice requires, according to your scheme, that grace should be bestowed on all men as sinners, and that all sinners should have an equal share, the wicked who perish in their sins are in possession of grace as well as the righteous, and their stock is just as large. The reason, then, that obedient

believers were foreappointed to salvation was not that God had a greater love for them, not that they received a larger measure of grace, not that they were the special objects of His favor. It was simply this. God foresaw that they would have a larger share of good sense, and would, in the exercise of their sober judgment, be inclined to avail themselves of the salvation placed within their reach. While, therefore, we praise God in exalted strains for His goodness and mercy, Arminianism reminds us that we ought not, in the overflowing of our gratitude, to lose sight of the fact that at least a respectable amount of credit is due to ourselves.

To draw this letter to a conclusion. In human redemption the Bible represents election as the antecedent, or that which takes the lead, and holiness as the consequence, or that which follows. Election is the engine; repentance, faith, love and obedience are the train. Arminianism reverses this. There repentance, faith, love, and obedience are the motive power, and election is the train. Thus, according to your way of thinking, it is not the engine that draws the cars, it is the cars that drive the engine.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXVIII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

I PROPOSE to-day to make a short discourse on a very fruitful theme, a theme which it is certainly not in my power to exhaust—the inconsistencies of the Arminian doctrine of election. The text is on the fifty-sixth page of the *Doctrinal Tracts*, the writer the Rev. John Wesley. “The sovereignty of God appears in disposing the time, place, and other outward circumstances—as parents, relations—attending the birth of every one.” That so staunch an advocate of Arminianism as the father of modern Methodism, should have given expression to sentiments so completely at variance with the principles of his own creed, is surely odd enough. Why, it may be asked, does God dispose the time, place, and other outward circumstances, such as parents and relations, attending the birth of those whom He foreknew would never be saved, whom, to quote Mr. Wesley’s own language, He foreappointed or predestinated as disobedient unbelievers to damnation, according

to a foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world?

Of all the bad men who lived in the last century, Voltaire was without doubt one of the very worst. The poison of his malignant satire, after working death to three generations, is unhappily as active as ever. The guilt that burdened the soul of that bitter mocker was, one might think, almost too much for one sinner to bear. And yet from all eternity it was clearly foreseen what he would be, and what he would do. According to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, it was not a matter of chance that Voltaire was born. The period in which he was born was not a matter of chance. The country in which he was born was not a matter of chance. The parents of whom he was born was not a matter of chance. All these things were providentially ordered and disposed, and in them the Divine sovereignty appears. Sentiments so just and orthodox we should hardly expect to find in a class of writers represented by Dr. Foster; but such was the teaching of John Wesley, and such, without doubt, is also the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

But since God disposes the time of every one's birth, why, it might be asked, was not

Voltaire brought into the world in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, or in the times before the flood, when human wickedness had risen to such a pitch that he could have done no harm? Or why was not this disastrous event put off until the millennial reign of Christ, when a scoffing infidel will be only an object of pity or abhorrence?

Since God disposes the place of every man's birth, why was not Voltaire born among the Esquimauxs or the Hottentots, in Patagonia or New Zealand, rather than in the heart of civilized and Christian Europe?

Since God disposes the circumstances of parentage, why were the parents of Voltaire suffered to bring into the world the author of so much mischief and desolation? Why was not the mother stricken with barrenness, or why did not a fit of apoplexy or a thunderbolt stay the birth? Why was not the future apostle of skepticism and blasphemy snatched from the breast by a dysentery, by the measles, by the scarlet fever? Would it not have been a thousand times better for his fellow-men? Would it not have been a thousand times better for the poor man himself? Might he not now be a smiling cherub before the throne of that Sav-

iour whose name he execrated, and whose religion he hated and opposed through a long and misspent life ?

When questions like these are put to us, we have a ready answer, an answer prepared for us by the Lord Jesus himself: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Such a reply, however, it is well known, never satisfies Arminians. With them such a reason has so little force that it fails to relieve the difficulty in their minds. They would rather ask, "Father, we desire to know *why* it thus seemed good in Thy sight?" And yet they say that the sovereignty of God appears in disposing the time, place, and other outward circumstances, such as parents, relations, attending the birth of every one. And they further say, with Mr. Wesley, that all disobedient unbelievers were foreappointed or predestinated to damnation from the foundation of the world. Predestinated to damnation from the foundation of the world ! But, you will rejoin, they were foreappointed to damnation because it was foreseen that they would refuse to believe and trust in Christ. The former you state as the fact, the latter as the reason of the fact. But no matter on what account, no matter for what reason,

“disobedient believers were foreappointed or predestinated to damnation from the foundation of the world,” the fact, the awful fact remains the same. Nor is this all. God, with a full knowledge of all their future ungodly deeds, and of their consequent future destiny, foreknowing that they would willfully reject the salvation of Christ, and would never be saved, disposed the time of their birth, the place of their birth, the outward circumstances of their birth. Here a very simple question and a very natural one arises. Why did God, foreseeing all these things, permit such persons to be born at all? Do, brother, give an answer to this question, if you can; I say, *if you can*.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXIX.

DEAR BROTHER:—

IT is a very old trick, and one still in special favor among infidels, to raise all sorts of objections against the Christian religion, while not a finger is moved to clear away the insuperable

difficulties that beset their own wretched systems of disbelief. The religion of an infidel is in general a religion of nothings. Sin is nothing. Holiness is nothing. Heaven is nothing. Hell is nothing. Eternity is nothing. The Lord Jesus Christ is nothing. The Holy Spirit is nothing. Even God the Father is nothing. The foundation, if it may be so called, being laid in nothing, what can a man be expected to build on *such* a foundation? Hence, to tear down, to break in pieces, to destroy the dearest hopes of his race, is the chosen and appropriate work of a skeptic. To lay a solid foundation, and to rear on it a well-proportioned and durable edifice, is no part of such a man's mission.

The Rev. Dr. Foster has, it is to be regretted, pursued a plan not unlike this in his *Objections to Calvinism*. He never brings forward arguments in proof of his own opinions. He seems to think that this is altogether unnecessary. He does not even condescend to tell us what his own opinions are. His business, one would suppose, is simply to caricature, to vilify, to assail the doctrines of the Calvinists. His readers very naturally inquire, what does Mr. Foster himself believe? It is no hard task to understand what he does *not* believe. It is easy to

see that he does not believe that it was right to constitute Adam the federal head and representative of his posterity ; that he does not believe that mankind might justly have been left to perish in their sins ; that he does not believe that sinners are answerable for their sins unless they first receive a measure of grace ; that he does not believe that God has a right to show mercy on whom He will show mercy, and to harden whom He will harden. It is easy enough to see what he does *not* believe, but it is by no means so easy to comprehend what he *does* believe.

But, after all, Dr. Foster is not so much to blame. I mean no reproach, I am rather complimenting his shrewdness, when I say that he has very good reasons for not bringing out his own sentiments. Were I an Arminian, I might, perhaps, find it convenient to adopt a similar policy. I have sometimes for amusement, sometimes for argument's sake, imagined myself a Methodist, and have wondered how I could, on Arminian principles, answer questions such as these : Why were those human beings permitted to come into the world, whom God foreknew from all eternity would never be saved, whom, as Mr. Wesley says, God foreappointed or pre-

destinated to damnation in view of their wicked works? Or why were they not cut off in tender infancy, and at once removed to heaven? Since Arminianism teaches that there can be no responsibility where there is no grace, why does God bestow grace on such as He knew would never improve this gift, on such as He knew would finally perish, on such as He knew could not, in fact, perish at all were it not for this most unfortunate blessing? Of the impenitent sinner, Dr. Foster says: "He was born corrupt, and so could not be guilty for this; he could not—without grace—escape from corruption, and so was not guilty for remaining in it." Why, then, is not every sinner, that God foreknows will not become a Christian, left in this enviable state of innocent depravity? Why are not all such sinners permitted to go on in such a blessed career of irresponsibility and corruption undisturbed and unmolested by grace? Voltaire, for example, was born corrupt, and so could not be guilty for this; he could not of himself escape from corruption, and so was not guilty for remaining in it; and, according to the authority of the Rev. Dr. Foster, had it not been for grace, the great French blasphemer would have had no guilt whatsoever because of

his corruption. Why, then, was this gift, this most unhappy gift conferred on the poor man, since it was certain that grace would ruin him forever?

Or if this unfortunate blessing had to be bestowed, if Voltaire could not be permitted to pass through life in irresponsible depravity, did he receive as large a share of grace as he might have received? Did God do all He could for him? Could He do no more? Was it out of the power of the Holy Ghost to convert him? Could not that vain, self-sufficient, boasting, shallow free-thinker be brought to lick the dust, and in an agony of remorse to rend the very heavens with cries for mercy? Have there not been other sinners as insolent and daring as he, as devoid of good principles, as black of heart, as ignorant of God, as fully bent on waging sacrilegious war against the dearest and holiest interests of the human family? Was this modern infidel a greater hater and a fiercer persecutor of the Lord Jesus than Saul of Tarsus? Why did it not also please God to separate Voltaire from his mother's womb, to call *him* by His grace, and to reveal His Son in *him*? I say again, I have often wondered how, if I were an Arminian, I could, on Arminian principles,

meet such questions as these. Were I actually a Methodist, I could not of course, any more than Dr. Foster, or any other Methodist, look such difficulties full in the face. I should most likely do as Dr. Foster does, not look at them at all. To meet such questions on scriptural ground, and without quibbling or shuffling to attempt a scriptural solution of them, is virtually to give up all the peculiar characteristics of the Arminian system of theology.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXX.

DEAR BROTHER:—

It is an old trick with not a few of your brethren, to charge Calvinists with believing that men are not free agents because they believe in the doctrine of election. There are thousands of simple-minded people who honestly think that we consider men as mere machines, and they think so because Arminian preachers and writers tell them so. I know, indeed, that you would not stoop to such misrepresentations,

but your course is rather the exception than the rule. I shall never forget an incident that occurred in my travels through northern Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1850. Late on a Saturday night, I put up at a public house, in a small village, to stay over the Lord's day. On inquiry, I found that there was but one church in the place, the Methodist Episcopal. At the hour appointed the next day for worship, I took my place among the congregation, a stranger to them all. As I am seldom taken for a minister where I am not known, I was pretty certain of remaining *incognito* on this occasion. My physiognomy, which you know is not the most prepossessing, drew on me the eyes of a number of persons in all parts of the house. They did not seem to know what to make of me. Some, as I afterward learned, suspected that I was a Jew, others set me down for a Frenchman or a German; not one took me to be a minister of the Gospel. Nor would they ever have found out that people write Rev. before my name, had I not felt constrained afterward to make myself known. In a short time the preacher entered the pulpit, and after the usual genuflexion, commenced the services. I knelt with the congregation, and could inwardly say Amen to

his genuine Calvinistic prayer. The text was taken from the last chapter in Revelation: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." As I went to church for edification, and not to criticise, I listened with pleasure to some excellent remarks on the greatness of the Redeemer's salvation, and the freeness with which it is offered to sinners of every description. The uncouth gesticulation, the blundering style, the superfluous interjections were passed over in the contemplation of the surpassing richness of God's goodness in the gift of His dear Son. No man could deliver sounder doctrine, and but for the peroration I should have gone away from a scene of pleasure and profit. Unfortunately, the sermon was not complete in the estimation of the preacher without a running fight with Calvinism. "Calvinism," cried the speaker, looking me full in the face, and possibly associating my features with the features of the system he was about to annihilate, "Calvinism, my brethren, is dead and buried long ago. That horrible doctrine belonged to the dark ages. It could not stand before the light of the nineteenth century. Yes, my brethren,"—and here again, whether by accident or to see what effect his oratory was producing on his new auditor, his eye fell full

upon me—"Calvinists are ashamed of their real sentiments. They believe that men are mere machines, not free agents." The orator then proceeded to give us an illustration of the defunct Calvinistic belief. "Suppose there were a thousand poor wretches"—I give you nearly his own language—"in a deep pit full of water and mire, and that God, for no fault of theirs, had thrown them into this dreadful pit. Now, suppose further, that God had decreed to save a small number of those who are the elect, but to pass by the great majority, who are the non-elect. Well, He lets down a rope from heaven. That rope is to draw up only the elect. But some of the non-elect, nevertheless, manage to get hold, and begin to cry aloud for mercy. But, no, they are told you are not elected; you must stay and perish where you are. Nine hundred non-elect are rejected, notwithstanding the heart-rending cries of some of them for mercy. Presently the rope comes within reach of one of the elect. But the elect one has no desire to be taken up, and when urged to take hold, positively refuses. But he is one of the elect, and willing or not he must be saved, and so God throws the rope around him, tightens the coil, and pulls him up to heaven, the elect

one resisting, kicking, and fighting most lustily all the while. This, brethren, illustrates the doctrines of the Calvinists. The elect are saved, do what they will; the non-elect are damned, do what they can. Thank God, we do not believe that men are mere machines. We believe in free agency. We believe in free grace. Bless the Lord, brethren,"—and here I was favored with another searching gaze,—“Calvinism is dead and buried.” I might stop here, as this is no unfair specimen of the outrageous misrepresentations so often heard from Arminian pulpits, but as the sequel turned out pleasant enough, I may as well finish the story. When the discourse was ended, I arose slowly to my feet, and begged permission to make a few remarks. It was granted. “Your preacher,” I remarked, in a calm and pleasant tone of voice, which, in the breathless silence, was easily heard over the house, “your preacher is a self-convicted resurrectionist. Calvinism is dead and buried long ago. Why could he not leave it decently buried? Why must he disturb its last repose?” Afterward, in a very serious, but conciliatory style, I took occasion to disabuse the minds of my fellow-hearers. I told them the plain truth about the matter, and they could not

but see, although I did not say so, that the illustration of the men in the pit was a most shameful, a most hideous caricature of the doctrine of the Calvinists. After I had concluded, the minister arose and made some remarks to the effect that it was to be regretted that Christians of different denominations should so often misunderstand each others' sentiments. "Brother," said he, directing his address to me, "will you walk into the pulpit and pray for us?" With pleasure the invitation was accepted. All that day and night, I was impressed with the singular scene through which I had passed. Early the next morning, my friend, the resurrectionist, made me a pleasant call at my lodgings, and, on taking leave, said, with an affectionate squeeze of the hand, "Brother Smith, the next time you pass through our village, do me the favor to make my house your home."

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXXI.

DEAR BROTHER :—

THERE has been for ages a dispute about the power of God on one point. Can Jehovah or can He not so decree the acts of intelligent agents as to leave the agents perfectly free? Does His omnipotence reach as far as this, or must it here succumb to an impossibility? That is the question, and it is merely a question of power. We hesitate not a moment to take the affirmative, and boldly maintain that such a high and mysterious prerogative does of right belong to the Almighty; while you hesitate not a moment to take the negative, and just as boldly insist that such a high and mysterious prerogative does *not* of right belong to the Almighty. Here again we are at variance. Which of the two renders to God the highest meed of honor, Arminianism, which, with extreme jealousy, would circumscribe and limit the Divine power, or Calvinism, which rejoices to leave that power untrammelled and unlimited?

The Arminian theory assumes that if an act is

free, it could not be foreordained ; if an act was foreordained, it cannot be free. Omnipotence itself, you say, cannot reconcile foreordination with free agency. This is saying too much. On what do you found an assertion so bold, and, I must add, so irreverent ? Is it on the Scriptures ? But nowhere is the absolute power of God over the whole domain of mind set forth in terms so remarkable for energy and force, as we find it in the teachings of the Bible. Is it on reason ? To us, indeed, the decrees of God may appear incompatible with human freedom, but it is only because the link which connects the two lies buried in depths which it is not given to men to fathom. Surely, brother, *you* will not pretend to have sounded the unknown depths of pure reason.

I have often observed with pain that the moment predestination or the Divine decrees are so much as named, the Arminian imagination seems to become alive with all sorts of fantastic images ; men turned into senseless blocks, men turned into machines, men pinioned and fettered and manacled, men forced against their will to commit sin, and then, poor creatures, cast into hell, to be punished for crimes which they were by an irresistible decree absolutely compelled to

commit; and under the influence of imagery so whimsical and capricious, the Arminian bile is stirred to its utmost depths.

What is predestination? You define it in one way, we define it in another way. You say that it is a decree which robs a person of his freedom, and converts him into an irresponsible machine. Predestination in this sense of the term you reject with abhorrence. I am happy to inform you that predestination, with such a meaning attached to it, we reject with an abhorrence just as great. We hold that human beings are free moral agents, not necessitated moral machines. What then is predestination? We affirm that it is a decree of God which will certainly be fulfilled, but which at the same time leaves the agent perfectly free, that is, just as free as if there were no Divine decree. This, you say, you cannot understand. You are right; you cannot. Nor can we. This is not the only subject you cannot comprehend. God had no beginning. Can you grasp the stupendous thought? You cannot. Do you on that account reject the eternity of God? But you insist that predestination involves a contradiction. You might with the same show of reason affirm that the eternity of God involves a con-

tradiction. Both these subjects are incomprehensible mysteries, but an incomprehensible mystery does by no means necessarily imply inconsistency with itself. The Apostle Paul declares that we are predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Now if predestination involved a real contradiction, such language an inspired writer would not have employed. We may lay it down as an incontrovertible proposition that it is absolutely impossible that such a Being as God should exercise a prerogative which contradicts and stultifies itself.

An error into which it is very easy and very natural to fall, lies at the bottom of all our difficulties in this matter. It is an altogether mistaken conception of God's nature. The operations of the Divine mind we are prone to regard as quite similar to what we experience in ourselves, and the Divine mind we seem to take for granted is only, so to speak, a human mind invigorated and magnified into colossal greatness. We seem to take it for granted that Jehovah must think and act as we do; whereas He can no more think and act as we do, than we can think and act as He does. It is well to

take heed to what He himself teaches us on this subject. "My thoughts are *not* your thoughts, and my ways are *not* your ways." The plans and purposes of mortals, while they cannot run into the past, penetrate but a little way into the future. The horizon which bounds the area of human effort is rarely out of sight, and beyond that horizon are no illimitable oceans, no boundless expanse, no immeasurable heights, no unfathomable depths. The plans and purposes of Jehovah, on the other hand, are the product of a mind with which all the past and all the future, the eternity which has swept over the universe, and the awful eternity which is yet to come, is as distinctly, as vividly present as this passing moment. There are points of resemblance in the modes of thinking between the lowest in the human scale and the highest in that scale, between an Australian savage and a Newton or a Webster. There are points of resemblance, we may safely assume, between the race of man and the race next above man, and the race above that race, and so on, up through all the gradations of the mighty scale, till we reach the highest development of created intellect. But vast as is the distance between the mental endowments of the lowest savage, and the mental en-

dowments of one of heaven's most exalted sons, it is not immeasurable. A molehill, which you can cover with the sole of your foot, is a very insignificant object, and Chimborazo, thrusting its snow-capped cliffs far beyond the region of the clouds, is a very sublime object. But the one may still be compared with the other. Were that molehill to shrink to the diminutiveness of a single atom of dust, and were that mountain to shoot its lofty peaks up to the orb of the moon, there would still be figures to express the enormous disparity. And vast as is the interval between the weakest human creature and the mightiest angel, between him that is but a few removes from the beasts that perish, and him that enjoys the illustrious distinction of standing in the presence of God, the interval partakes of the finite, and it can be spanned. But when we attempt to ascend from the creature to the Creator, all comparison is ended. Here we are dumb. Here it well becomes us to be dumb. And it is here that the voice of the Infinite Majesty is heard out of the invisible glory to command : "Be still and know that I am God. Be done, ye worms of the dust, with your foolish comparisons and foolish reasonings. Presume not to judge me by your-

selves. My judgments are depths, where your feeble powers are utterly bewildered and confounded. My ways your weak understandings cannot possibly comprehend. They are now, and I mean that they shall forever be, past finding out. To my creatures I render no account of my acts. I condescend to no explanation of the reasons for doing what I do. The hearts of all men are in my hand, and I turn them as the rivers of water are turned. I make peace and I make war. I make light and create darkness. The wrath and wickedness of man I make to praise me, the remainder I restrain. I do according to all my pleasure not only among the obedient armies of heaven, but also among the rebellious children of men. I chose my people, in Christ my Son, before the foundation of the world, predestinating them to the adoption of children according to the good pleasure of my will. I have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I harden whom I will harden. Let no one presume to demand of me, then, why I find fault, on the audacious plea that men, in fulfilling my decrees, are not resisting my will. Let the race of Adam understand that I am the Lord, and that though I give no account of my ways, though my thoughts are not and cannot be

their thoughts, and my ways are not their ways, justice and righteousness are ever the habitation of my throne."

Let us now, in conclusion, listen and hear what the Rev. Dr. Foster has to say to all this. "And, first," says the doctor, "I object, it renders the conclusion inevitable that God is the Author of sin. I object to the doctrine of decrees, because it destroys the accountability of man. I object further, if this doctrine be true, at the final judgment the conscience and intelligence of the universe will and must be on the side of the condemned. Heaven and hell would equally revolt at it, and all rational beings would conspire to execrate the Almighty Monster capable of such a procedure. Hell would be a refuge from such a Being!" This is plain, straightforward, outspoken Arminianism, set forth by a plain, straightforward, outspoken man.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXXII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

“God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.” “Pharaoh hardened his heart.” Moses, writing by inspiration, employs these three expressions, and it evidently makes no difference to him which one he employs in the sacred narrative. The first ascribes the hardening to God. The third ascribes it to Pharaoh. The second ascribes it either to Pharaoh or to God. Now how is this to be accounted for? Had the inspired penman been an Arminian, would the obnoxious sentiment, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, be found in the book of Genesis or in any other book in the Bible? I think not. How *could* an honest Arminian write such a sentence? The whole difficulty in the case is easily solved if we can only make up our minds to trust the infinite wisdom and the infinite power of Jehovah. God determined to harden Pharaoh’s heart, and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened. How this was done is not explained, and it is clearly not given to us to know. We ought,

therefore, to be willing to leave the mystery just where we find it, unsolved and unsolvable.

The hardening of the Egyptian monarch's heart was in one important sense God's act, and in another important sense Pharaoh's act. The act, so far as God was concerned, was perfectly right; the act, so far as Pharaoh was concerned, involved enormous guilt.

It involved enormous guilt because it was Pharaoh's own act. He, like every other human being, was a free agent. He chose his part. He refused to obey. He resisted the divine mandates. He set up the standard of open rebellion. He defied the Omnipotent. He was brought to condign punishment. Had he not been guilty in the true and genuine sense of the term, he would not have been set up as a monument to all generations at once of the amazing patience and of the fierce wrath of Almighty God.

The act, so far as it related to God, was perfectly right. Right, not only because He is accountable to none and can do what He pleases, but because it was right in itself. All the world acknowledges the right in God to do things, which, if done by us, would justly be stigmatized as fearful crimes. He blasts men's hopes,

cuts off their crops, destroys their goods, afflicts their households, burns up their dwellings, strikes down their children, sends war and pestilence and famine, with all their dreadful train of woes, and nobody presumes to call in question the Divine goodness or justice. Nor, as I said, is it right merely because He has the power to do all these things unhindered. It is a right which everybody feels and acknowledges belongs to Him. So in the matter before us. He did what no creature could have done without deep guilt. He hardened Pharaoh's heart. Although it is impossible to say how this was done, it was so done as not in any way to impair the freedom of that man's actions. Not only before the divine tribunal, but before the tribunal of the world and before the tribunal of his own conscience, Pharaoh, King of Egypt, stood condemned.

But if the principles laid down by the teachers of Arminian theology be sound, Pharaoh, King of Egypt, was a much injured man. Not only did he not do wrong, in the premises; it was impossible that he should do wrong, for how could he be to blame if God hardened his heart? To blame for what? For having a hardened heart? But was it not God that hardened his

heart? "And the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to go in to the King of Egypt and demand that he should let the children of Israel go." "But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." The demand was made; it was rejected. "And God hardened the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not hearken to them." "Accomplished what his Maker wished him to do."—I am quoting the very language of the Rev. Dr. Foster—"what it was not only impossible he should avoid, but what if he had avoided would have been a breach of his Maker's will, a damnable sin." It is true Dr. Foster is not here speaking particularly of Pharaoh, but of any and every instance where a person fulfills the Divine purpose; so that as a matter of course Pharaoh's case is comprehended in the general rule. "It is to no purpose," continues the author of *Objections to Calvinism*, "that I am told that God decrees events, yet so as thereby violence is not offered to the will of the creature, because this strikes my mind only in the light of a contradiction." "Am I accountable," he asks with indignant warmth, "for doing what by decree I am compelled to do? Or is the Author of the decree responsible?" In other words, was the King of Egypt, tyrant, oppressor,

persecutor, defiant rebel, accountable for his daring wickedness and hardness of heart, or was Jehovah himself, decreeing the hardness of heart, responsible? To Dr. Foster's mind it is perfectly manifest that the Divine decree takes away all moral qualities from human actions. Indeed, so clear is this matter, that he does not see how it can escape any one's observation. The good doctor is even afraid that his readers might blame him for attempting any proof of this; all that he has to do is to assert that it is so. That is, it is perfectly clear to Mr. Foster's mind that the whole guilt of hardening the heart is to be ascribed not to Pharaoh to whom it could not of right belong, but to God himself to whom it must of right belong.

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXXIII.

DEAR BROTHER:—

IN the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we find this statement: For of a truth, against Thy holy child Jesus were gathered together Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gen-

tiles and the people of Israel, to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before (literally, predestinated) to be done. The death of Christ was thus foreordained. The circumstances attending His death were foreordained. It was foreordained who should be the agents that were to compass His death. Let us pause a moment and see with what wonderful clearness these things are set forth. It is not Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and Jews, were gathered together to do what Thou foresawest that they would do at any rate; it is not Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and Jews, were gathered together to do what Thou didst not hinder them from doing, what Thou didst merely permit them to do. No; but Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the Jews, were gathered together to do whatsoever, that is everything that, Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done. In the fullness of time, not an hour sooner nor an hour later, the Saviour was born. And in due time, not an hour too soon nor an hour too late, the momentous catastrophe with which was connected the destiny of untold myriads took place. Christ died for the ungodly. On more than one occasion His watchful enemies had lain in wait to take His

life. But in vain, for His hour was not yet come. At length His hour, that eventful hour predestined from eternity, was come, and with it came also the actors in that wonderful scene. The first act was the betrayal; then came in quick succession the arrest, the mock trial, the sentence of death, the scourging, the crucifixion; the actors, Judas Iscariot, Herod the Tetrarch, Pontius Pilate the Governor, the Roman soldiers, and a multitude of the people of Israel.

The fertile imagination of the Rev. Dr. Foster has more than once indulged itself in his book, by representing angels and men as sitting in judgment and passing a unanimous sentence of condemnation on the decrees of God. Now let us for a few moments suppose it within the range of things possible, that the common Arminian sneers and flings at foreordination and predestination could really find utterance in the solemn day of final account. Herod with confidence in his looks might rise and say in that august presence: "Lord, Thy hand and counsel determined before that I should set in array, and with my men of war mock Thy Son. Was I to blame for this? Did I commit a wrong in fulfilling Thy purpose? Was it in my power to frustrate Thy designs?"

Pontius Pilate might with equal confidence defend his course, and say: "It is true I arraigned, tried, and condemned Thy dear Son; but didst Thou not thyself decree that I should do this? Or didst Thou not at least decree that this should be done? Did I do more, did I do less than that which Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done? Must not Thy wise purposes and plans always be carried out? Would it not have been a sin had I attempted to do otherwise?"

The Roman Gentiles might boldly put in their plea in a style not unlike the following: "We took Jesus and scourged Him, we platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, we smote Him on the face with the palms of our hands, we spat on Him, we pierced His hands and His feet, we parted His raiment and cast lots on His vesture. All these things we did. We cannot deny it. We do not wish to deny it. We rather claim a reward for doing Thy will. Were not the Scriptures to be fulfilled? Did we not do what Thy counsel determined before should be done? Was it not absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer all these things? Did not He himself say that thus it *must* be? Could it then be otherwise? If the

Scriptures *must* be fulfilled, if Thy purposes *must* be accomplished, are we in any sense to blame? Do we not rather merit the highest praise and the most substantial rewards for doing whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done?"

The people of Israel, with Judas Iscariot at their head, might also on their part take courage and set up this formidable Arminian plea: Christ was betrayed into the hands of sinners, but was it not expressly written that thus it should be done? Could I help it? Judas might ask. Was it not so determined? Am I accountable for doing what by decree had to be done? If Christ had not been betrayed, would not Thy counsels have been frustrated? And would it not be a sin to frustrate Thy purpose? The high priest might take up a similar line of defense. It is true I insulted the majesty of Thy Son, I refused to give Him an impartial hearing, I did all that was in my power to bring Him into trouble, and foolishly and without a shadow of right fastened on Him the charge of blasphemy. But, Lord, was not this in accordance with Thine own decree? Didst Thou not design that it should be so? Does it not stand recorded in Thy word that we who were engaged in this

transaction were all gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done? Now we would ask, could Thy counsel be set aside? And must we be damned for doing the very things which Thou didst decree should be done?

The chief priests and scribes and rulers of the Jews, firm in the Arminian opposition to the Divine predestination, might here interpose: "We, the people of Israel, were resolved, right or wrong, let come what would, to secure the conviction and the condemnation of Christ. But we do not in any sense regard ourselves as culpable, because we only did that which had to be done, that which Thy holy word expressly said Thy counsel determined before should be done. Without an atonement there would have been no salvation. Had not Christ died there could have been no atonement. Is it then not manifest that we merit, not condemnation, but the highest praise for bringing about such a glorious result? Were not we and the Gentiles and Herod and Pontius Pilate severally by our acts accomplishing Thy holy will? Suppose we had *not* been gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done, what would have become of Thy coun-

sel and purpose? What would have become of the prophecies which foretold these things? What would have become of the lost race of Adam? What would have become of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets and holy men of old who had already been accepted and received into heaven because Christ was to die for their sins?"

Let us plead with Thee, O Lord, would it be consistent with righteousness and justice to find fault with Thy creatures for doing Thy will? Couldst Thou find it in Thine infinitely holy nature to condemn *us* for doing what Thou knowest Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done? Thou couldst not, we know that Thou couldst not, all heaven knows that Thou couldst not. But should it be otherwise, shouldst Thou really hold us responsible and pass sentence of condemnation on us for doing the acts, the very acts which were before determined and foreordained, we hesitate not to declare that we should feel constrained by a sense of justice to ourselves, openly and boldly to enter our solemn protest and to take an appeal from Thy tribunal to the intelligence and conscience of the universe!

Now you will perceive, my dear brother, that this is exactly in the style and manner of the

Rev. Dr. Foster. His book can furnish whole pages of argument just as striking and just as cogent, and I may add, just as sound as these, and his book, you will remember, is indorsed by the highest authority in your church, the Rev. Bishop M. Simpson and the present accomplished editor of the Methodist Quarterly Review. But do you not see, my brother, that the Arminian theory applied to scriptural examples not only falters but completely breaks down? Undoubtedly the Divine decrees were, according to the eternal purpose which was purposed in Christ Jesus, in every minute particular carried out and fulfilled. But did this exculpate the miscreants who had joined in a league to shed innocent blood? Did this diminish the guilt of their persistent malice and rage? Does the Bible take the part of Judas and Herod and Pilate? Does it take sides with the hypocritical Jews and hardened Romans? Does it excuse or palliate the bitter mockery, the howls of vengeance, the buffetings, the crown of thorns, the spikes and the cross? Do the Scriptures insinuate that there is unrighteousness with God? Do the Scriptures talk of appealing from the tribunal of the Judge of all the earth to the conscience of the universe?

JOHN SMITH.

LETTER XXXIV.

DEAR BROTHER:—

THE other evening, in the company of a few select friends, I proposed for our instruction that we should each undertake to turn the leading sentiments of Arminianism into the language of prayer. We made the attempt and found it to be a failure. It could not be done. I have often heard a good prayer offered by Arminians, but never an Arminian prayer. A Methodist invariably borrows the sentiments of his Calvinistic brethren when he comes to the throne of the heavenly grace. He seems to know as if by instinct that his own are not suitable. In truth, Arminianism cannot be worked up into prayer. It would crumble to pieces in the very attempt. It is only as you temper it with the great truths of Calvinism that it can be made up into anything like prayer proper to be offered to the Divine Majesty. On your knees, you Arminians are all very good Calvinists, and as long as you remain on your knees you do virtually indorse the

principles and doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. But, with strange inconsistency, the moment you rise to your feet you are all Arminians again. If it could be so contrived that all the pious Methodists in Europe and America should for just one whole day preserve the attitude of devotion, then for just one whole day would all the pious Methodists in Europe and America be good and sound Calvinists. What a blessed spectacle, brother, this would be !

We have thus decidedly the advantage of you. Our prayers and our sermons are of the same material. We can convert the sentiments of our sermons into the language of prayer; we can take our prayers and turn them into sermons. This you Methodist preachers cannot do.

Try, if you have the heart to do it, to address Almighty God in the language of your sentiments. In what follows I solemnly protest I mean no irreverence, it is only Arminianism spoken, not to men, but to God. "Lord, Thou canst not have mercy on whom Thou wilt have mercy. This would make Thee partial. Thou canst not harden whom Thou wilt harden. This would make Thee unjust. Thou canst not

control and guide the free acts of Thy creatures. This would make them machines and Thee often the author of sin. All are *not* glorified whom Thou didst justify, since some who have been justified fall from grace and are finally lost. All are *not* justified whom Thou didst call, for many are called who refuse to come. Moreover, whom Thou didst call Thou didst *not* predestinate. None are predestinated. Thou art not strictly bound to bestow grace on fallen sinners; but, Lord, it is certain that if Thou didst not bestow grace, sinners would not be accountable for their deeds. If Thou shouldst withhold grace from any man, of that man Thou couldst not require repentance and faith, and shouldst Thou undertake to bring such a person to punishment, the conscience of the universe would be against Thee and on the side of the condemned. Thou couldst not in righteousness permit men to come into the world with such natures as they have, hadst Thou not made compensation for the wrong inflicted on the human family. Thou didst make ample compensation in the gift of Thy dear Son, and no man can now justly find fault with the arrangement whereby we are born with natures depraved and corrupt."

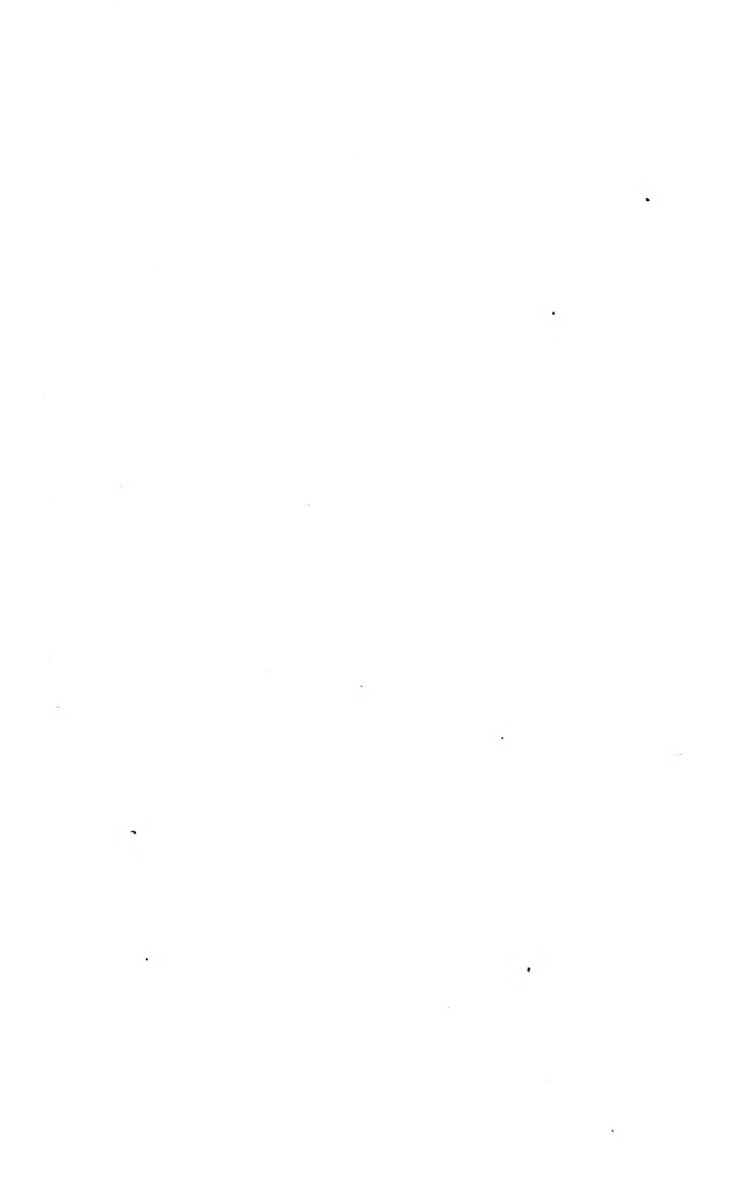
This is Arminianism of the purest kind, but I am confident in the assertion, that no Arminian, alive or dead, in any of the four quarters of the globe, has ever ventured in any tongue spoken by man to address God in such a style.

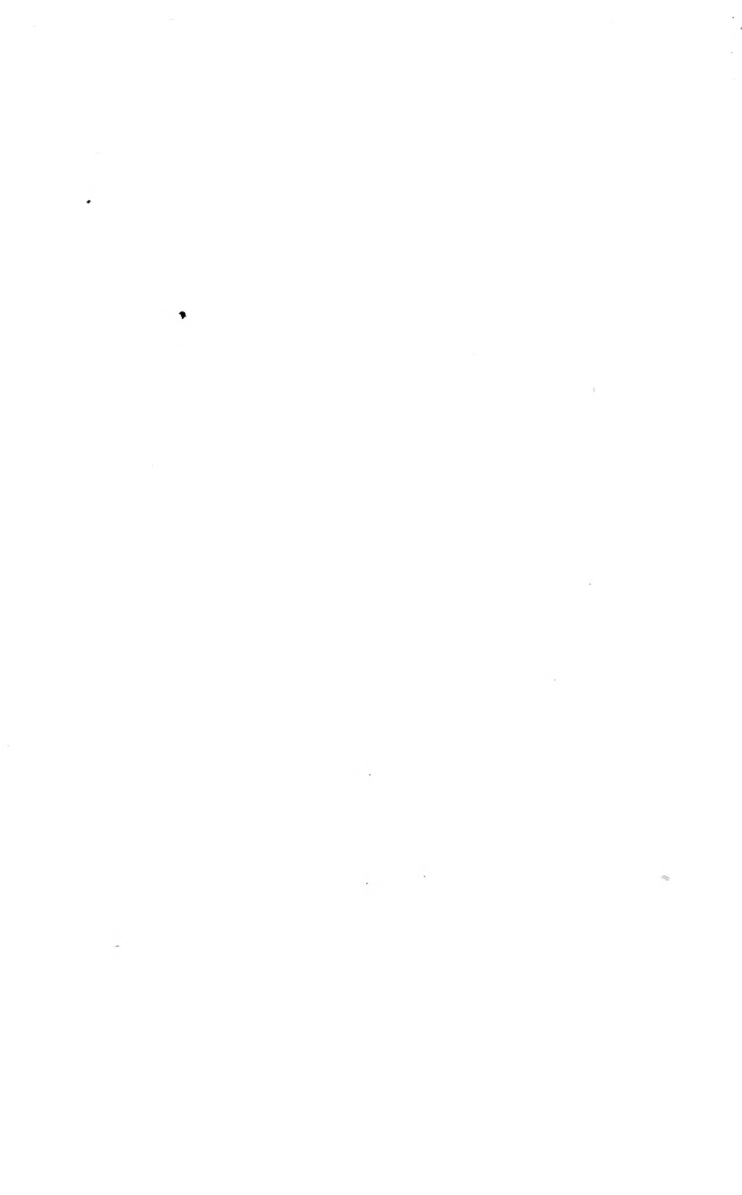
Between the Methodists and Roman Catholics there is indeed a wide distance. It is the gulf between Protestantism and Popery, between mental freedom and mental bondage. On one point, however, they are not so far apart. They are both given to praying in a foreign tongue—the one literally, the other metaphorically. The Romanist delivers a discourse in English, French, or German, as the case may be, and says his prayers in Latin. The Methodist preaches the doctrines of Arminius and prays in the language of Calvinism. Neither the one nor the other is ever known to pray publicly in his own proper tongue; the Papist will not, the Arminian cannot. Brother, if I belonged to a denomination which could not pray in the language of its own sentiments; if every time I was about to enter into my closet or into my pulpit I had to leave my own creed outside the door and had to borrow my neighbor's creed for the purposes of devotion, I say if I belonged to a

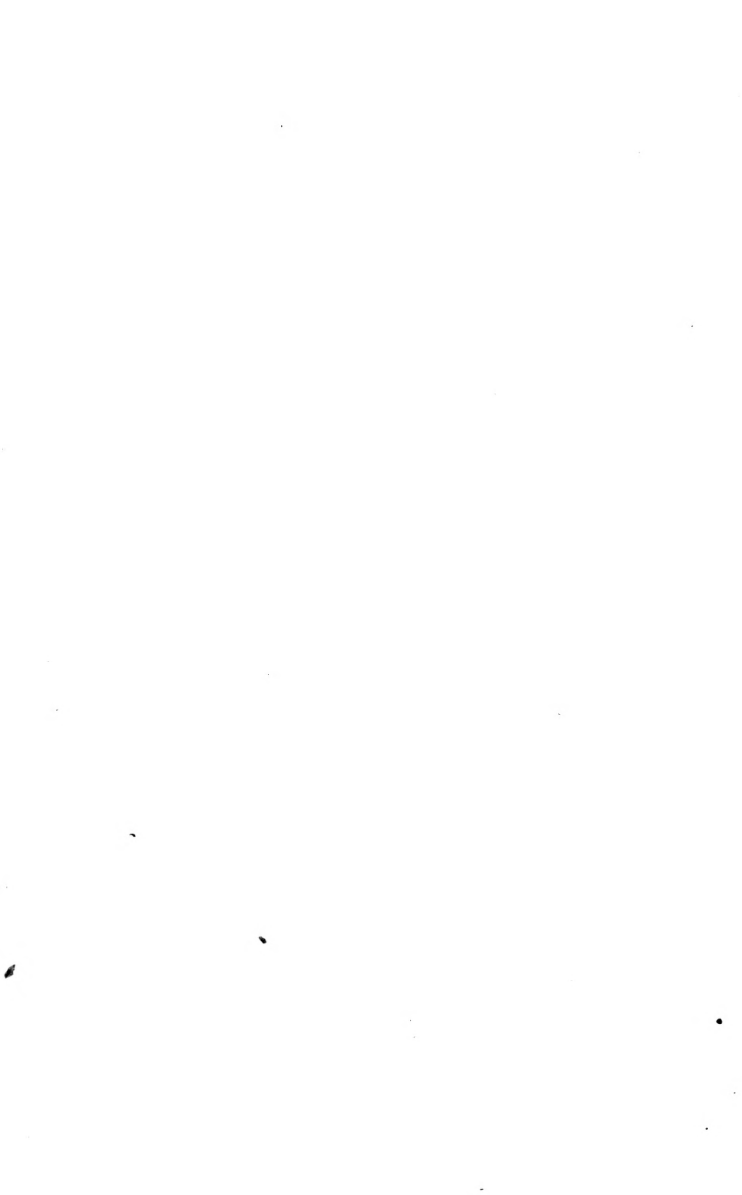
sect that lived thus on borrowed capital, I think that I should dissolve my ecclesiastical relations on short notice, and cast in my lot with those who can preach as they pray and can pray as they preach.

JOHN SMITH.

THE END.







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